

Cooperative Cup Final:

## Back 1 (0) Carloway 1 (0) (Carloway won 7-6 on penalties)

*Fraser Macleod 75      Seumas Macleod 83*

*At Garrabost, Point.  
Saturday, 1st September.*

*Referee: Calum "Chancey" Macleod.*

*David Beaton*

*Seumas Macleod   Calum Tom Moody   Gus Maciver   Donald "D.I." MacIennan*

*Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald   Domhnall Mackay(capt.)   Billy Anderson   Murdo "Sgweg" Macleod   Dan Crossley*

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod*

*Sub.: Darren Mackinnon (Donald "D.I." MacIennan) 78.*

*Fraser Macleod*

*Craig Macleod   Chris Macleod   Colin Maclean   D.J. Macdonald   Stuart Smith  
Murdo "Gress" MacIennan   Ross Hall(capt.)   David "Ox" Macleod   Andrew "Mowgli" Macleod*

*Iain "Tohan" Macleod*

*Sub.: Kevin "Bloxy" Murray (Craig Macleod) 54; Coinneach Smith (Ross Hall) 87.*

So, once more, the weary men of Carloway found themselves trotting out on to some foreign field in search of glory, to rid themselves of the albatross of lack of Cup success since 1957 round their necks. They had been here before, of course: Garrabost, in the Moldova Lewis in 2009, against this very team, when they had let a 2-0 lead slip from their grasp. This season, already, a 1-0 lead in the EaF, versus West Side, had been surrendered, while in 2010 in this Cup, the same team had beaten them 3-1.

The season before, in the Jock Stein, and two years earlier in the Jock Stein and in the Lewis, there had been straightforward thrashings, 0-7; 0-4; 1-4, against their then-nemesis, Lochs. Cup Final misery has been a dominant leitmotif of the Blues' history. At times, na Gormaich's Cup campaigns have been electrifying; their performances in Finals to be regarded with apprehension. Tonight the signs were propitious: apart from Scott Macaulay and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald, both much missed, there was only one call-off: Andrew "Tago" Maciver, still in Northampton. Mindful of the quality of the opposition, the same cautious approach was adopted as on Wednesday against United: 4-5-1, but who to leave out? The unfortunates were Darren Mackinnon and Donnie Macphail, relegated to the bull-pen alongside Andrew "V.P." Macleod, Kevin "Barra" Macneil, and Ben Smith, the rationale being that, with doubts over Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald's fitness to last 90 minutes, Mackinnon would come on as required.

Back, at first glance, were less fearsome than expected: no Martin Maclean, of course, now at Brora, and Kevin "Bloxy" Murray on the bench; but also no

Murray Macleod, Inny "Red" Campbell, Andrew Maciver, or Jason Macleod. Still, the back four of "Mowgli", "Ox", Ross Hall, and "Gress", looked pretty imposing, with Chris Macleod and D.J. in front of them. Also, the best goalkeeper on the island, Iain "Tohan" Macleod, thought to be - or hoped to be - at Fort William, was there to grant gold-plated A1 security. Chief hate figure down Carloway way, Fraser Macleod, prowled alone up front, starting out leftish. In this year's League fixtures, both sides had done each other serious harm, Carloway thrashing the Bacachs 5-1 at Cnoc a' Choilich in early May, then being done over themselves at Col Uarach, 1-4 in mid-May, thanks to Frasmac, Ross Hall, and "Mowgli". So - honours even - to battle.

Any Blues' wish that the Bacachs had only half a mind on this fixture, the other half already at Leurbost on Monday, were swiftly dispelled. An initial surge down the left led by Crossley saw the ball passed in to Moody approaching the box on the left. His slip square to his right to Seumas Macleod was lobbed high on to the top of the bar, and cleared. The early sparring made the battle lines clear: Back seemed relaxed enough to sink back and invite the Carloway midfield forward, as their back-line assumed a Roman legion-type tortoise shell formation, relentlessly repelling any Blues' attack wide, confident that "Mowgli" and "Gress" would keep up with and on the right side of Crossley and "Dokus". Pace was a problem for "Gress" and "Ox", but with "Dokus" mysteriously starved in favour of movement down the left through Crossley or straight in the middle, through "Gochan", and "Ox's" disciplined positioning, a clear look at goal was denied.

The wet surface helped neither side either, as the long ball diagonal, favoured early by Ross Hall, mainly for Fraser Macleod, or the more studied approach of "Sqweg" and Anderson, had to be spot-on or the pass skited far beyond its target, and even if successful, an excellent first touch was necessary.

The half-chances appeared regularly for na Gormaich: on 12 minutes, "Sqweg" played in to Anderson, 16 metres out in front of goal, but he miscued, then a Crossley run on the left saw the winger and "Mowgli" wrestle their way for half the field, then in towards the box, before Crossley was crowded out. A corner on the left was cleared out left and from the throw-in, 14 metres from the bye-line, Anderson burst into the box, and slipped the ball back to Crossley, but his shot from the edge of the box went two metres over the bar. On 20 minutes another Crossley run saw him check under pressure from "Mowgli", turn the ball back to the arriving "D.I.", and his cross from 24 metres, out on the left touchline, broke 16 metres out to Seumas Macleod, whose snatched shot was handled safely by "Tohan". Four minutes later a diagonal cross from the right broke left to "Sqweg" on the bye-line, but his overhead kick was claimed easily by the keeper.

As openings failed to materialise, the temptation was to over-commit, and leave space at the back. On 28 minutes a D.J. corner on the left was headed clear by Moody, ran on to by the breaking Maciver, but his long diagonal cross was headed over by "Dokus" from 16 metres. Then came Back's first real chance, a free-kick, 22 metres out, right in the centre. However, D.J.'s carefully-taken strike cleared the bar by a metre. Then Colin Maclean tried his

luck from 25 metres but it went straight to Beaton..

Finally, on 39 minutes, the trademark Bacach long diagonal found Frasmac breaking fast on the right behind the line but his drive from an awkward angle, 14 metres out, thudded into the near side-netting. Three minutes later, the striker escaped again, wide right, but his low sharp cross, 12 metres from the bye-line, was too early for the rushing Craig Macleod, and the next minute Beaton had to get down expertly to his right to save from "Gress" from 18 metres.

Half-time: Back 0 Carloway 0.

There were no obvious signs of change in either team's approach going into the second-half. The question, of course, for Kevin Anderson and "Windy" was, what other options are there? And as for Iain MacIennan, the formula was working, so keep on-message, that shield would continually frustrate, spirits would drop, and the chances at the other end would increase.

Immediately a Carloway break on the right led to Crossley winning the ball in the centre, 18 metres out, but his hooked low shot went outside "Tohan's" left-hand post. Five minutes later a low cross from "Sqweg" was met by "Gochan" in the centre, but the shot was blocked and spun over the bar. Carloway had clearly upped the tempo, no doubt to reclaim the flow; Back replied by bringing on "Bloxy" for Smith, but right away a low diagonal cross from "Sqweg", 25 metres out on the right saw "Tohan" moving fast to push "Dokus's" header round his left-hand post. A minute later, saw a breathtaking double stop from "Tohan": an Anderson corner on the right was blasted in from 12 metres off the head of Moody, low, but the keeper managed to block it on the line; then block "Gochan" who tried to blast the loose ball through him, 2 metres out, but he pawed the ball away round his left-hand post.

The pace ratcheted up: on 70 minutes a cross from the left was finger-tipped on to the right by "Tohan", but "Gochan" had only room to blast the return high into the side-netting. Then the bottom dropped out of the Carloway bucket, the sucker punch *par excellence*, courtesy of an old enemy, "Bloxy", who had waited patiently to do exactly what he had been brought on to the pitch to do: the forward pass to him as he faced his own goal, midway within the Carloway half; the body shield from Moody, and the half-turn and low diagonal flick for the deadly Frasmac to ghost like lightning behind Gus Maciver, just on the right side of the flag, to whizz in and slip past a helpless Beaton on his left from 16 metres. A thing of beauty in its calculated execution. Who could not admire it? (0-1)

Anderson and "Windy" faced the tiger: "D.I" off; Mackinnon on; a three-man back-line, if that, as Macleod and Moody were now more in the Back half than their own. But still the tortoise held: "Mowgli", "Ox", Hall, and "Gress" were impenetrable. On 81 minutes a Moody header from an Anderson corner on the right ran along the bar and away. The suddenly, on 83 minutes, as the sandglass ran down, an equalizer, so simple in its creation, it made you wonder how it was so hard to score in the first place. A bit of pace on the left

from "Dokus" gave him time to cross high at the touchline, 10 metres out from the bye-line, and Macleod, for once having time to manoeuvre in front of goal, 14 metres out, delivered the perfect header waist-high, just inside "Tohan's" left-hand post. An absolute peach! (1-1).

There was still time for two heart-stopping moments at either end, before the nightmare of a penalty shoot-out. In 86 minutes it was Back's turn to be caught upfield as Carloway broke and the ball was switched fast to "Dokus" clear on the left 22 metres out. He carried the ball to the edge of the box, but as "Ox" closed in desperately, his early shot went harmlessly a foot wide of "Tohan's" right-hand post. At the death a long ball through the middle seemed to have been closed down by Maciver, midway within his own half, but the wet ball unexpectedly spun off his toe backwards to Frasmac running clear, but as he moved on to it gratefully, it spun off his boot in turn and through to Beaton.

Full-time: Back 1 Carloway 1.

Ah, well, what no one wanted: the dreaded penalty deciders. Get a move on, Sepp, and think up something different. Anyway, two bad misses; three near things; several bolts of lightning; and five great saves. Then, it was Carloway's name that came out of the hat, in the rabbit's mouth! In Ecclesiastes, Solomon stated there is a time for everything under heaven. Perhaps, this, finally, was Carloway's time. Certainly they achieved what they have threatened to achieve in the last 4-5 years, when Peter "Dokus" Macdonald initiated the revolution that Kevin Anderson and Graeme "Windy" Miller brought to fruition tonight.

Back took their penalties first:

<u>Back.</u>		<u>Carloway.</u>	
Kevin "Bloxy" Murray	X 0-0	Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod	X 0-0
Chris Macleod	1-0	Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald	1-1
Fraser Macleod	2-1	Dan Crossley	2-2
David "Ox" Macleod	3-2	Domhnall Mackay	3-3
Colin Maclean	X 3-3	Calum Tom Moody	X 3-3

Sudden death:

D.J. Macdonald	4-3	Seumas Macleod	4-4.
Andrew "Mowgli" Macleod	5-4	Kevin "Gochan" Macleod	5-5
Craig Macleod	X 5-5	Gus Maciver	X 5-5
Murdo "Gress" MacIannan	6-5	Billy Anderson	6-6
Coinneach Smith`	X 6-6	Darren Mackinnon	7-6

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon stated there is a time for everything under heaven. Perhaps, this, at long last, was Carloway's time. Certainly they achieved what they have threatened to achieve in the last 4-5 years, when Peter "Dokus" Macdonald initiated the revolution at Cnoc a' Choilich that Kevin Anderson and Graeme "Windy" Miller, not forgetting the players, brought to fruition tonight. And for the established players - Captain Courageous Domhnall

Mackay, etc. - a Cup - and a medal - at last.

The result led to the usual extravagant claims at the presentation: "*It would have been a travesty if Carloway had lost*"; "*The Blues deserved it*"; "*They took the game to Back. They earned it*", and so on. A load of bull, of course. In football, as in life itself, which, of course, to Shankly was a pale imitation of football, desert, like history, is the province of the victor. He who scores more deserves the crown. Carloway scored from the spot seven times; Back six; ergo, Carloway "*deserved*" to win.

If Seumas Macleod had not scored in normal time, Back would have "*deserved*" to win. This Final presented two diametrically opposed styles, Back's perhaps imposed by circumstance. At full strength, Carloway played the way they wished: granite back four, with Macleod, Moody, Maciver, and "D.I." resolute throughout; blanket midfield, steel in the middle in Mackay and Anderson; pace and artistry on the wings in Dan Crossley and "Dokus"; an irrepressible front man in "Gochan" who defies summary, a nightmare for a marker.

What's harder than granite? Whatever it is, Ross Hall and "Ox" were it, "Mowgli" and "Gress" not far behind. Pace might have been a problem but when a defence keeps its shape, few problems in that area arise. Loss of assets up front were the problem for Back, though D.J. Macdonald did his damndest to become Martin Maclean, but such a star may be irreplaceable. So, two styles which exemplified the Mourinho doctrine perfectly. Carloway's *totaalvoetbaal* / *Barca* style: endless energy; running; possession; territory; passing forwards or sideways; switch positions; confuse the opposition; break them down. Back: stay secure in position; keep the shape; frustrate the opposition; win the loose ball; move it forward early as heads go down; bring on the animateur; activate the Usain Bolt predator. Two contrasting approaches, both equally valid. Both could have secured victory. Quite a night!

Carloway Man of the Match: Dan Crossley.

Back Man of the Match: Ross Hall.