

Lewis and Harris League:

Harris 0 (0) Carloway 4 (1)

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 36
Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald 49
Fraser Macleod 56
Kevin "Barra" Macneill 74*

*Ref.: Stuart Macleod.
At Rally Park, Tarbert..
Friday, 12.4.13.*

Andy "Gress" MacLeod

*Johnny Porter Darren MacDonald John "Fuggie" MacDonald Benn Esslemont
Jamie Fraser Scott Morrison Andy "Lafferty" Morrison Zander Young Mark Morrison
David Campbell*

Subs: Ali Morrison; John Sutton; James "Bobo" Thomson.

David Beaton

*Donald "D.I." MacIennan Calum Tom Moody Gus Maciver (capt.)
Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Billy Anderson Murdo "Sqweg"
Macleod Dan Crossley
Scott Macaulay Fraser Macleod*

*Subs.: Seumas Macleod (Scott Macaulay) 67; Kevin "Barra" Macneil (Dan Crossley) 72;
Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur (Fraser Macleod) 84.
Subs not used: Colin Maclean; Craig Hacker.*

The earth always turns and it was that time once more to "*Sound the pibroch loud and high ----- And rise and follow -----*" Carloway! In an unusual start for the Blues, they headed south to the furthest ground in the League for their campaign opener, to meet a Harris team keen to celebrate their continued League participation and improve on last season's nightmare. Indeed, the 2001 League champions' solitary League point in last season's misery was in this self-same fixture, in July, where they led 2-0, were overhauled to 2-3, then surprised themselves - and the Blues - with a last minute equalizer. Na Gormaich gained revenge later that month with a 4-1 EaF win at Rally Park, then suffered again in the return, when Malky Campbell and John Sutton clawed two goals back in a creditable 2-3 defeat.

The close season registered few changes for Carloway: Andrew "Tago" Maciver went off on an African mission, while Donnie "Xavi" Macphail left the club; Fraser Macleod joined the club, via Lochs, as did Craig Hacker ex-Harris; and Scott Macaulay, thankfully, was back in contention after his leg-break. So, the problem was not scratching a team together, but whom to leave out. Inspirational force of nature, Domhnall Mackay, was absent, at David Martin's wedding (as was Assistant Manager, Graeme "Windy" Miller); dead-ball magician, Gordon "Tago" Macdonald, was recovering from a knee operation, and Ali "Tolsta" Maciver (scorer of the most spectacular goal ever at Cnoc a'Choilich) was on honeymoon, whilst some of the young-bloods were also missing.

Kevin Anderson opted for a 3-man back-line: "D.I." MacIennan, Calum Tom Moody, and Gus Maciver; while the midfield was flooded: "Dokus" and

"Sqweg" flanked powerful animateur, Billy "Pirlo" Anderson; Dan Crossley, in classic Thomas Müller Raumdeuter-style, was to dominate the left; and Kevin "Gochan" Macleod covered oceans of space on the right, from back to half-back to winger to striker, to augment awesome strike duo, Scott Macaulay and Fraser Macleod.

So it was *"time to leave the books in dust, And oil the unused armour's rust"*. Immediately, Frazmac's pace on the right took him behind the line and into the box, but "Gress" reacted impressively to block his drive from 14 metres. On 6 minutes Frazer reprised this feat but opted for a left-foot chip, which the goalkeeper just managed to touch across goal at full-stretch and away for a corner. On 9 minutes it was Crossley's turn to outpace the Hearach defence, on the left, then turn inwards past two defenders into the box, only to be blocked by a third.

The pace and power of the Carloway attack was stretching the Harris defence, wide and back, as Anderson's Charlie Gallagher diagonals questioned Esslemont and Porter. A quick-fire break, Anderson-"Dokus"-Frazmac, down the left squared to the arriving "Gochan" to fire over from 14 metres centrally. Five minutes later, a move down the left found Anderson in the centre, midway within the half, to fire the early cross rightwards where Frazmac and "Gochan" impeded each other before a cross-header was pushed away leftwards, to Crossley, who again went down, but his penalty claims were once again waved away. A few minutes later another blistering Crossley run on the left saw him slip on to "Dokus", who doubled back to send a snap low cross to Frazer but his shot flew past "Gress's" left-hand post.

The Hearach's back frame was battling against relentless assault, resiliently co-ordinated by "Fuggie", with Esslemont in support, but the midfield was smothered by a 5-man blue blanket, and nothing could happen up front. David Beaton did not touch the ball till the 27th minute. Like Johnny Ramensky, Anderson kept unpicking the defence, next sending Macaulay clear but control was lost and "Gress" was on it. Then Maciver released Frazmac left; 16 metres out, he backstepped to cross low but Macaulay's chip cleared the right-hand bar. A "Dokus" corner on the left was met by a reverse header by Moody at the far post but cleared the bar left.

The inevitable breakthrough arrived in 36 minutes, when a move forward into the Harris half led by Anderson - who else? - saw his low sweep rightwards dummied (intentionally?) centrally by Macaulay to find an unmarked "Gochan" ghosting into the right of the box, to drive low, hard, and true across the goalie into the far corner.**(0-1)**.

Four minutes later another long ball sent Frazmac and "Gochan" clear behind the line to run to the edge of the box, but as the latter went to pull the trigger, the ball bobbed, and his finish landed in the Shiants. The half concluded with a Fraser run on the right (what is his time for the 100 metres?) but his drive from 18 metres went low outside the Harris right-hand post.

Half-time: **Harris 0 Carloway 1**

It's difficult to advise what the most appropriate words would have been to say to the Hearachs at half-time; "Fuggie" had marshalled his troops well, but inability to cut it in midfield, had meant incessant pressure on his defence and David Campbell stranded up front. Kevin Anderson's task was easier: more of the same; keep polishing away the rustiness; keep calibrating the gunsights; the goals will come. And of course they did.

Carloway ditched one tome: "*Zen and the Art of Just Missing*," for another: "*Zen and the Art of Scoring*". On 49 minutes Macaulay powered towards the box on the right and his low forward diagonal crept through a forest of legs to find "Dokus" to tangle with "Gress" 8 metres out, and on the ground, hook a low ball home. **(0-2)**.

Five minutes later Frazmac was sent clear into the box on the right, but he hooked his parting drive well wide left. A massive cloak of relief dropped from the speed merchant's shoulders on 56 minutes when a golden ball from "Dokus" sent the striker through to draw "Gress", then right-foot flick the ball slickly, à la Jimmy Greaves, past the helpless keeper from 16 metres.**(0-3)**.

Two minutes later it was the amateur's turn himself, to thunder a free-kick from 20 metres on to the right-hand side of the Harris bar. From the rebound came Harris's best - and only real - chance on the night: a 3-on-1 break downfield but the Hearach interplay was slack, the cross-pass slow to deliver, and retreating Blues were allowed to crowd out the attackers before they even reached the box. A brief period of Harris pressure resulted in a diagonal cross ball from deep on the left breaking right, to be gathered by Sutton, on the right touch-line. He reversed to cross then appeared to trip, or be tripped. Not clear-cut, but again, no penalty given.

On 66 minutes an Anderson corner on the right led to "Gress" pushing wide a "Gochan" double-header at the far post. A minute later "Dokus" on the right slotted the ball low diagonally to the left to an unmarked Fraser Macleod but "Gress" was out like lightning to block brilliantly from 14 metres. On 74 minutes Frazmac rocketted down the right, checked on 18 metres, then drove the ball low diagonally through the defence, where "Barra" won a tussle with the arriving keeper to force the ball home.**(0-4)**.

There were two further chances for na Gormaich; on 77 minutes a "Gochan" burst on the left, then cross, found Frazmac arriving in the centre, but he had to lean back and down to head, and the ball flew over. The roles were reversed four minutes later, when Fraser Macleod charged down the right like Halley's Comet, turned in and attempted to flick past from 10 metres but the keeper blocked well; the ball rebounded, hit Frazmac, then flew back over "Gress" square to "Gochan" to head home. However, he was adjudged offside. Mmmm close.

After this performance, the omens seem propitious for Carloway, with no obvious weaknesses on the night. The inability to convert, from a multitude of

golden-edged chances early on, can be put down to first-game-of-the-season rustiness. Though Harris functioned creditably at the back, John "Fuggie" Macdonald and Benn Esslemont remaining unshakeable throughout, Andy Macleod solid and dependable in goal, Zander Young and the Morrisons were swamped in midfield, hence there was no attacking threat throughout.

It remains to be seen how the Blues will cope with a more cutting threat from midfield - a David Macmillan, or Nic Davis, or Colin George Morrison, for instance - a wing-striker like Ali "Barvas", or a cobra like Scott Maciver. Well, on this evidence. A competent, hungry display, however, to get the season going, with each man contributing their own unique qualities to the overall whole; steadiness and decisiveness from the back three; artistic invention from "Dokus" and Crossley; Gascoigne-like insight and killer ball from Anderson; power and directness from Macaulay and "Sqweg"; and the irrepressible pace and energy from "Gochan" and Frazmac. David Beaton must have felt unloved at the back. Long may it continue!

Full-time: **Harris 0** **Carloway 4**

Harris Man of the Match: Andy "Gress" Macleod.

Carloway Man of the Match: Billy Anderson.