

Lewis and Harris League:

Carloway 3 (2) Ness 0 (0)

Fraser Macleod 18, 39

Donald "D.I." MacIennan 90+3

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Friday, 19.4.13.

Ref.: George Macaskill.

David Beaton

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

Kevin "Gochan" Macleod ☒ Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Billy Anderson Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald

Scott Macaulay Fraser Macleod ☒

Subs.: Dan Crossley (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 45; Kevin "Barra" Macneill (Kevin "Gochan" Macleod) 77; Ali "Tolsta" Maciver (Scott Macaulay) 86.

Subs. not used: Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod; Andrew "V.P." Macleod.

Yellow cards: Fraser Macleod; Kevin "Gochan" Macleod.

Thankfully, reports on Carloway/Ness fixtures no longer have to open with: "*Ness haven't beaten Carloway since*" That remark was rendered invalid last season when honours were finally even: in June, the Blues, no doubt believing they only had to turn up to ensure a JS Final appearance, were dumped out of the Cup 1-2 by the Niseachs at Fivepenny, but went on, minus the arrogance, to trounce them 6-0 three weeks later in a home League fixture. A fortnight later the Greens again confounded the Blues, this time at Cnoc a' Choilich, 2-1, in the EaF SF(1), but were subsequently thrown out 4-1, 5-3 on aggregate, in the second leg at Fivepenny, in a tie which hung in the balance till the 74th minute. Yet in early September Ness were again to triumph, 1-3, albeit against a thin na Gormaich, unwilling to risk major stars between two glistening Cup appearances; a merited League win, nevertheless, memorable for a beautifully-taken "Bubble" opener after 5 minutes.

Tonight, once more, Kevin Anderson and Graeme "Windy" Miller had a pleasant dilemma: with everyone available (though Dan Crossley was carrying a worrying lower leg injury), a lot of egos had to be accommodated in the starting line-up. Seumas Macleod wasn't wasted on the bench this time and Rally Park's 3-5-2 became 4-4-2, with Macleod becoming right back/half and Kevin "Gochan" Macleod moving forward to right half/winger/striker. Dan Crossley and Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod dropped to the bullpen, alongside returnee Ali "Tolsta" Maciver, Kevin "Barra" Macneil, and Andrew "V.P." Macleod, enabling Captain Courageous Domhnall Mackay to slot into the holding midfielder role, though at times he was more Stephen Gerrard than Claude Makélélé. The rest of the team picked itself.

The last few days' weather have been rather unforgiving, yet George Spy still contrived to present an immaculate Cnoc a' Choilich, a perfect stage for an opening Senior fixture of 2013. Unfortunately, however, a howling west-sou'westerly threatened to carry the Niseachs back to the Butt as it propelled the Blues towards Sweeney for most of the opening half. The initial 20 minutes were to witness both sides battling, with mixed success, to tame the ball in conditions that demanded close control, measured passing and as few high balls, either way, as possible.

Properly mastered, the wind operated as a twelfth man to the Blues: early pressure resulted in two corners on the right, the second headed narrowly over centrally from 14 metres by Calum Tom, off "Dokus". The Ness central defence settled and a war of attrition developed in midfield, about 10 metres into the Niseach half. A crowded half smothered Billy Anderson's propensity for the golden diagonal, and the main weapon of assault became Frazmac's and "Gochan's"

electrifying pace, though the latter's equilibrium was rocked by an early heavy tackle. Andrew "Bubble" Macleod tried to animate Ness forward out of midfield but though he twisted/turned/created space, lack of attacking targets meant the Mackay/ Moody/ Gus Maciver axis was largely untroubled and could dominate and crowd out any potential threat.

On 17 minutes the wind doubled the pace of a speculative "Dokus" drive from 20 metres, whizzing 2 metres wide of Ness's left-hand post. A minute later came a simple opener: a Billy Anderson corner on the left, beautifully-flighted (aren't they always?), found "Gochan" just inside the box to head inwards, for Fraser Macleod to flick high past an unprotected Sweeney to his right (1-0).

Complacency almost led to an immediate reply, with Andrew Macleod breaking wide on the left to the touchline, doubling back and forth like Garrincha, then laying back centrally, but a retreating "Gochan" arrived in time to boot clear. On 22 minutes a quick corner on the right saw Anderson move in along the touchline to cross head-high to Seumas Macleod at the near post but his attempt glanced away off the post. Moments later Sweeney had to move smartly to nick the ball before a breaking "Dokus", off a Frazmac cross from the left. On 26 minutes neat midfield interplay by Micheil Smith sent Ness rightwards into the Carloway box; the lay-off back to the central edge of the box saw a No. 3 (Scott?) flighted shot safely held by Beaton under his bar. On the half-hour a speculative "Dokus" drive, utilising the wind, from 25 metres, nearly fooled the keeper but he recovered to smack the treacherous dipping ball off to his right with his foot.

Out of nothing a second Carloway goal appeared: a tussle on the left, 20 metres from the bye-line, saw Scott Macaulay rob Scott Macrury, advance, and his low squared cross found an unmarked Fraser Macleod arriving in the centre to tap past a helpless Sweeney. (2-0). Moments later Frazmac set up an overlapping "Gochan" on the right but as he moved in, the wind carried the ball away from him and past. Then 3 minutes later "Gochan" , breaking right, returned the favour, but his low cross was difficult to control and spun away from Macleod.

Half-Time: [Carloway 2](#) [Ness 0](#).

The question now was, could Ness use the wind to their advantage, as Carloway had eventually managed to do in the first half? An opening surge suggested it was possible. In arguably Ness's best chance of the game, on 46 minutes, the ever-present pain in Carloway's neck, Andrew "Bubble", had the nerve to rob the Blues' captain in central midfield, 22-23 metres out, race in on the right, draw Beaton, then send the ball round the keeper - and the far post. Ouch! Now that would have made the game really interesting! Na Gormaich retaliated immediately, with a "Gochan" break on the right to the bye-line, but his whipped low cross was scrambled against Frazmac and flew past for a goal-kick.

Ness were certainly pushing forward into the game much more but Carloway were gradually harnessing the wind again and accelerating down the wings fast, time after time. On 54 minutes a Crossley trip on "Bubble" led to a Macleod free-kick from 20 metres centrally flying straight to Beaton. Three minutes later Fraser Macleod was freed to move into the box unmarked but Sweeney managed to block his drive with his shins for a corner. The same player burst from the centre line down the left wing two minutes later, outpacing the defence and into the box, but his slip from 12 metres mirrored "Bubble's" earlier attempt and whooshed past the far post.

Another break on the left on 63 minutes by Macaulay saw him check, reverse, then cross low into the box, but a covering Jack Dunlop blocked on the edge of the box, unfortunately with his arm. Unintentional perhaps, but it did deny Carloway an advantage. The normally decisive Mackay seemed to hesitate, before striking low to Sweeney's right; however, the keeper guessed right and dropped confidently on to the ball.

A stalemate was rapidly developing in central midfield and the wings were increasingly exploited by both teams. As the game ticked to a close, the Niseachs seemed to find room to penetrate on the left, mainly through the elusive No.3 ("Titch" Morrison?), leading to a rush of free-kicks. On 75 minutes a Craig Harris free-kick, 25 metres out on the left, was headed clear, returned, then headed past for a corner from a crowded area by Moody. Two minutes later another flighted Harris free-kick, 22 metres out on the left, seemed to take a slight deflection off a Carloway head in the wall and was carried wider on to David Beaton's left-hand post. As full-time approached, another huge Niseach free-kick from 30 metres centrally was wind-assisted to zip just outside the Blues' right-hand post.

Moving into added-on time, the seemingly inexhaustible Frazmac shot down the right but his low cross saw Sweeney beat "Barra" to the ball to hold. Deep in added-on time, yet another surge out of defence by Moody led to a lay-off right to "D.I.", who wall-passed with "Barra", then released a delightful straight defence-splitter between centre- and left-backs, to find Frazmac ghosting behind the line to unleash a right-foot drive from 14 metres wide to Sweeney's right, but the keeper was out like a flash to second-guess his shot and somehow managed to pull off a miraculous block with his right-foot. The ball spun out high to the approaching "D.I" on the edge of the box and his delicate right-foot chip crept in under the bar over the massing defenders in the 6-metre box for his first competitive goal (3-0). There was still time for a final Blues' drive on the right, which necessitated Sweeney having to make a careful double save low to his left by the post.

Full-Time: [Carloway 3](#) [Ness 0](#).

Like many score-sheets, 3-0 conceals a more complex narrative: a much harder game than the final score suggests - on several levels. Although there was little direct attacking threat from Ness until later, this was a tiring war of attrition between two teams willing to run - and run - and run. Although they were astute defensively and much more creative coming forward, repeatedly dangerous up front, na Gormaich still had to put in a non-stop 95-minute shift to prevail over a Niseach side willing to compete aggressively throughout.

Nothing is "easy" in this League, and it is perilous hubris to even think, now and then, it might be. With the *démise* of Loch's hegemony, everything is up for grabs. On the evidence so far, it is best not overlooked that it is every bit as difficult to defeat Ness and Harris, as Athletic and West Side, and judging by tonight's display, this young Ness side will become an increasing handful - if they turn up a chance-taker.

David Beaton was a bit more involved in proceedings than last week, though, in many ways, this confrontation did resemble the previous week's outing at Rally Park: an opposition functioning creditably at the back, a sound keeper, but a midfield who found immense difficulty in making any headway against the "Gochan"/Mackay/Anderson/"Dokus"(Crossley) nexus, again till late in the game, then they were pushed wide to find space. Hence, Gus Macleod and Calum Tom found it easier to snuff out any attacking threat centrally, and push up, leaving Seumas Macleod and "D.I." Maclennan to be mindful of the main thrust, especially on the left. In turn, it meant that Scott Macaulay and Fraser Macleod, supported by the irrepressible "Gochan" (then "Barra"), could come at the Ness defence at pace from all angles, relentlessly.

There was a perceptible tightening-up in cohesive purpose and uninterrupted focus on the matter at hand tonight; marginal improvements all round on Tarbert. The message from the bridge, no doubt is, "*Steady as you go!*"

[Carloway](#) Man of the Match: [Gus Maciver](#).

[Ness](#) Man of the Match: [Craig Harris](#).

