

Acres Boys Cup Round 2:

## Carloway 4 (3) Lochs 1 (0)

Fraser Macleod 2, 10, 34

Steven Price 83

Ali "Tolsta" Maciver 81

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Monday, 22.4.13.

Ref.: Robert Mackay.

David Beaton

Calum Tom Moody Gus Maciver Donald "D.I." Maclennan

Kevin "Gochan" Macleod ☒ Domhnall Mackay (capt.) ☒ Billy Anderson Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod Dan Crossley

Scott Macaulay Fraser Macleod

Subs.: Seumas Macleod (Billy Anderson) 45; Ali "Tolsta" Maciver (Fraser Macleod) 66; Andrew "V.P." Macleod (Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod) 78

Subs. not used: Kevin "Barra" Macneil.

Red cards: Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 30; Domhnall Mackay 44.

In the past few seasons, Carloway's ABC campaigns have tended to open with a deflating April thrashing at Goathill, courtesy of Athletic, each featuring a Cup brace from perennial *bête noir*, Scott Maciver: 0-3 last year; 1-4 in 2011; and 2-3 in 2010. Diehards have to backtrack to 2007 to discover the last time Carloway progressed beyond an opening round, 3-2 versus United, thanks to Scott Macaulay and a Phil Macleod double. So, tonight there was the blessing of a home game against a side once regarded as invincible, circa 2003-2011 - now considered "*beatable*".

However, last season's confrontations against Lochs had brought mixed fortune: opening day misery at Cnoc a' Choilich had witnessed Lochs take the game to the Blues in a neat first-half display, gain the lead through an early Jim O'Donnell strike, then disappear from sight in a goal-less second half. In May, na Gormaich, inspired by Dan Crossley, were to redeem themselves with two late goals in a stormy 2-0 victory over the then Jock Stein Cup holders; then, despite losing Scott Macaulay (on Select duty the previous Saturday) for the season, the Blues contrived to dominate a return League visit to Leurbost, before allowing Peter Mackenzie, just off the plane from Benidorm, to inspire the Maroons to a late surge and 2-1 triumph, with ex-Carloway stalwart, Gordon Craigie, notching the winner.

Their 2012 contests concluded with two explosive Cup encounters at Cnoc a' Choilich in August, the Blues edging a 2-0 Coop victory, with Andrew "Tago" Maciver crashing in a fifth-minute opener before enjoying an early bath (cards, both yellow and red, also being constant features of the bone-jarring nature of such ties); then, na Gormaich triumphing once more, 4-1, in a red-blooded Moldova Lewis "battle", with Graeme Mackenzie and Angie Campbell the two nominees this time for early exits. A controversial penalty, converted by Domhnall Mackay, settled the game, though not opposition tempers.

Tonight, the Anderson/Miller fine-tuning continued with the Blues reverting to 3-5-2, with Seumas Macleod dropping to the bench, alongside Andrew "V.P." Macleod, Kevin "Barra" Macneill, and Ali "Tolsta" Maciver. In midfield Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod replaced Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald, ruled out with back problems, a subject for ribald comment from concerned teammates. The Lochs line-up continues to change: recognizable were Iain Gillies (ex-West Side/Ness) in goal; a central defence of the two Peter Mackenzies; David Macmillan in the engine room; and Hammer of the Blues, Donald "Nommie" Macdonald, to lead; playmaker, Angie Campbell, was unfit.

Friday's west-sou'westerly continued to affect attendance, though, against it, Lochs opened confidently, moving forward in sharp, ground movements, as the driving Macmillan attempted to link up with the shape-shifting "Nommie" to create an opening. Then, suddenly, the once regular feature of Carloway games - the explosive opening - manifested itself again: a loose Lochs forward pass was cleared from the edge of the box, forward to Mackay, who, breaking towards the halfway line, lifted a wind-assisted through ball over the retreating Mackenzies. The race was on but Peter Mackenzie seemed to be successfully ushering the racing ball into the hands of the approaching Gillies on the edge of the box, with Fraser Macleod wrong-sided. However, as the three closed, Frazmac stuck a foot in, the ball seemed to bash off the stooping keeper's hands to his left, and as Mackenzie and Gillies crashed into each other, the striker rounded them to sidefoot home into the empty net from 16 metres (1-0).

Clanger/bad luck/opportunism? Whatever, it unsettled the Maroons, especially at the back, and Carloway saw the method. Another break, this time down the right, saw Macaulay sent into the box along the right bye-line but his drive met the nearside side-net. Lochs retaliated on 7 minutes with a right-foot cross which crept over to the far edge of the box, to be expertly trapped by "Nommie" and put back to Macmillan breaking right, but his tantalizing shoulder-high cross 10 metres out found no takers. Three minutes later and it was more misery for Lochs: an Anderson diagonal left from the halfway line freed Macaulay to advance left, where his curler, 12 metres from the bye-line, passed behind the line, out of the keeper's range, for Macleod to convert home from 10 metres to Gillies's left (2-0).

Two minutes later Frazmac was through again, but Gillies managed to block on the left edge of the box; he gathered the rebound to run past the displaced keeper to the left and cross but "Gochan", under pressure, had to lean forward and down to head, and it cleared the bar. Lochs edged possession, but lack of firepower meant neat forward play was unrewarded, while the Blues direct forward diagonals and through centres, to "Gochan", Frazmac, and Macaulay, continually pressured the backline's pace and marking. Then a first chance for the Leurbest men: a break and cross on the right saw a low squared ball, 12 metres from the bye-line, booted clear by "D.I.", ricochet off Calum Moody right, for Lochs' No. 10 to fire a ferocious rising shot just over from 14 metres. Two minutes later, the ever-elusive "Nommie" wriggled clear on the left, cut in, and the wind caused Beaton to take two attempts to grasp his tricky cross. Carloway responded with a Macleod race clear on the left, cut back and smart cross for the unmarked "Gochan" to come in on the end of the line but shoot wide to the right from 16 metres. On 27 minutes Moody tried his luck low on the wind, from all of 35 metres, and the swirling ball bounced off the struggling keeper to be booted hastily for a corner.

On the half-hour, the scales unexpectedly shifted: a cleared ball from the Lochs' left defence was called back and the game halted; a Lochs player was on the ground. A confab took place between referee and linesman; "Gochan" was called over; a red card was brandished. A late tackle seemed to be the offence. The game died slightly, then a sudden Carloway break on the right saw "Sqweg" keep the ball in play on the right touchline by the halfway line, then push it forward to the breaking Frazmac, who, for once, trawled the ball towards the right edge of the box. Suddenly, he looked up and released a screamer from 18 metres across the surprised keeper and chest-high into the far corner of the net (3-0). Iain Gillies was left clutching air.

Carloway visibly relaxed as Lochs continued to play forward neatly but without menace. But the half wasn't over yet. More controversy! On 44 minutes, in the centre circle, a breaking "Nommie" was slide-tackled heavily by the Carloway captain, who won the ball but clipped the striker hard. Another red card! Another "stooshie!" Again the referee was surrounded by irate Carloway players!

**Half-Time: Carloway 3 Lochs 0.**

No prizes for guessing what the fans discussed over their half-time cups of tea. After the rights and wrongs of the card incidents, the big questions were: can Carloway survive with nine men? What will Lochs do with this numerical advantage? The answer soon emerged, "*Not as much as they hoped*".

Even though Carloway understandably ceded most of the outfield and sought to hold what they had, despite the inventive genius of Macmillan in midfield, increasingly supported by a tireless Peter Mackenzie, and the continuous movement and creativity from the ageless "Nommie", a clear cutting edge remained absent. Indeed, na Gormaich surged first, the irrepressible Frazmac escaping down the right to square across the edge of the box for "Sqweg" to send a curler just outside the far junction of cross and bar. A minute later Lochs no. 2 did a Moody from 25 metres but it travelled straight to Beaton. Indeed, it was the 62nd minute of a megabore, back and forth across the face of the Blues' line within the Carloway half, as openings were sought in a resolute defence, before an insightful defence-splitter picked out "Nommie" cutting through rightwards into the box, to check and test Beaton from 16 metres. A minute later, two dangerous inswinging corners on the Lochs right saw Macrae force Beaton to beat the ball back out off his goal-line and past, then send his next just over the bar onto the roof of the net.

As numbers told, chances finally were appearing: on 68 minutes "Nommie" broke on the left to feed in to Macmillan but his shot from 20 metres sliced wide of Beaton's left-hand post. Five minutes later a Price lob-shot from the right edge of the box was tipped over by Beaton; the resulting corner had to be tipped over also. On 76 minutes another break on the left and low cross resulted in a blocked shot from 16 metres spinning low straight to Beaton.

Finally, on 81 minutes, a goal did arrive. Unfortunately for Lochs, with typical sucker-punch irony, it came at the other end. A clearance allowed "V.P." to move forward and send the perfect breaker before a charging "Tolsta", rushing beyond a sparse defence into the Lochs half from the right. With Mackenzies snapping at his heels, he carried it into the box, before releasing a low drive though the legs of the unlucky Gillies as he approached (**4-0**).

An air of unreality descended upon proceedings: with minimal incisive effort, nine men now led a side which had dominated second-half possession 4-0, though the Maroons did claw one goal back in 86 minutes, when a corner on the right broke to the edge of the box, for Steven Price to drive home low, assisted by a nasty deflection to Beaton's left (**4-1**). The game then petered out lamely with Lochs only able to muster three final long-range efforts, one clearing the bar, the others held safely by David Beaton.

**Full-Time: Carloway 4 Lochs 1.**

As strange a 90 minutes as any spectator is likely to see on the island. Even Philip K. Dick couldn't have thought this one up. For thirty minutes, the few spectators witnessed a classic tightly-contested affair between two contrasting strategies: a neat, forward-moving, but slow-passing Spanish approach colliding with a more direct, power-driven Germanic midfield, with insightful delivery diagonally or over to pacy strikers. The crucial divide lay in fire-power: Carloway had it a-plenty; Lochs had none.

The sight of maroon shirts commonly means a card for "Gochan"; fortunately, it's usually yellow. Of course, the sendings-off did distort proceedings. What must worry the Lochs management most is how little they pressurised the Blues, especially in the second half. In the whole game, they created "dangerous" situations at most half a dozen times. In the first half, Carloway broke freely and regularly through a weak midfield and uncertain back-line. The pace of "Gochan" and Frazmac was vital; their willingness to drive into the box and shoot, decisive. Without the sendings-off, the Blues would have been untroubled throughout; in fact, they were untroubled anyway. Club circumstances change rapidly, due to the exigencies of island life, but with a

sound defence, powerful midfield, and hungry strike force, the Blues' prospects at present seem promising. Two ties next week against Athletic should clarify the 2013 pecking order.

**Carloway** Man of the Match: Fraser Macleod.

**Lochs** Man of the Match: David Macmillan.