

Acres Boys Cup Semi-Final:

Athletic 0 (0) Carloway 3 (1)

Fraser Macleod 26, 53, 75

At Goathill Park.

Wednesday, 1.5.13.

Ref.: George Macaskill.

David Beaton

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

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

Scott Macaulay Fraser Macleod

Subs.: Seumas Macleod (Billy Anderson) 70; Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald (Fraser Macleod) 75; Kevin "Barra" Macneill (Kevin "Gochan" Macleod) 85.

Subs. not used: Andrew "V.P." Macleod; Craig Hacker.

Murdo "Mojo" Maclean Scott Maciver (capt.)

D.J.Clinton ☒ Nic Davis Elliot Rudall ☒ Gary Macleod

Ali "Koch" Morrison Steven Clinton Jason Maclean Ally Murray

Colin Macritchie

Subs: Daniel Macleod (D.J.Clinton) 65; Iain Murdo Maciver (Jason Maclean) 75; Scott Morgan (Ally Murray) 82.

Sub. not used: Murdo Macdonald.

Yellow cards: D.J.Clinton 28; Elliot Rudall 34.

And so to Carloway's personal Field of Nightmares, and a first meeting with the other early form team of 2013, Athletic, the reigning league champions, for a Final spot on Friday, 10th, versus Back. The last three seasons have witnessed ABC campaigns opening with April maulings at Goathill versus Athletic, inspired by ace striker, Scott Maciver: 0-3 last year; 1-4 in 2011; and 2-3 in 2010. However, early form this season suggested the Blues might be better-prepared for this evening, assuming the white heat from Round 2's collision with Lochs had cooled to boiling point.

Three convincing victories, versus Harris, Ness, and Lochs, had revealed an adaptable team strategy, solid defending, a powerful midfield, and a deadly strike-force, with the explosive presence of Fraser Macleod already having recorded 6 goals and 2 assists. Tonight the same starting line-up continued, though Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald and Craig Hacker returned to the bench, alongside Seumas Macleod, Kevin "Barra" Macneill, and Andrew "V.P." Macleod; Ali "Tolsta" Maciver was unavailable.

Despite rumours of personnel absence, an imposing Athletic eleven confronted them: no Scott "Flapjack" Macaulay, "Doug" Maciver, or Robert Jones, but, as feared, up front the finest front-man on Lewis, Scott Maciver, offset by the irrepressible Murdo "Mojo" Maclean; a combative midfield of dead-ball expert, Gary Macleod, and the elegant Nic Davis on either side of the *Makelele* figure of Elliot Rudall; with former West Side favourite, D.J.Clinton, on the left; and Murray/Clinton/Jason Maclean/"Koch" along the back; David Beaton's rival for Best Goalkeeper on Lewis and Harris, Colin Macritchie, (sorry, "Sweeney"!) guarded the goal.

No white rabbits or bathing of faces in the dawn dew this freezing Mayday, although a cloud-free, windless evening witnessed Carloway kick-off with the benefit of bright sunlight behind them. Predictably, the opening 20 minutes saw two strong midfields stymie each other, with the Blues edging the few chances created. In 5 minutes a beautifully-flighted Anderson corner from the right caused goalmouth confusion, before a strong Macaulay run took him diagonally from the right to the edge of the Aths' box, then across it, before a tackle sent an unlucky rebound off

him and past. On 11 minutes a "D.J." throw-in on the left, 12 metres from the bye-line, eluded a defender; "Mojo" gathered, 14 metres left of goal, cunningly reversed into space and crossed head-high, but with no takers. Crossed back from the right, the danger was thwacked clear.

Moments later, a de Boer ball from the halfway line (Anderson?Moody?), freed the racing Fraz Mac, who flew into the right of the box but his low screamer from 14 metres whizzed across the advancing Macritchie and well-wide of the far post. One minute later Gus Maciver and "Gochan" left a loose ball in their right-half area to each other and "Mojo" was on it in a flash, travelled rapidly to the left edge of the box, checked, but just as he set his sights, the ball bobbed, and his right-foot strike lifted well-wide of Beaton's left-hand post.

On 16 minutes Fraz Mac was freed once more down the right, reached the box and crossed a trademark low bullet. Anderson connected; was blocked; tried again; it rebounded again, this time to Macaulay; his attempt hit Sky Lab. On 26 minutes, a scintillating Crossley run from halfway, down the left took him past Macleod, then Murray, inwards past a third, to lay off to Anderson, whose right-foot thunderbolt from the edge of the box, thudded down off the underside of the bar and out. Fraser Macleod reacted first to head home to Macritchie's right from 10 metres. (1-0).

Aths didn't wobble but continued to compete strongly: every time Maciver had breathed, a phalanx of Blues had dropped on him, but he finally broke free on 32 minutes down the right, then cut in, but his left-foot try from 22 metres cleared the bar. A minute later a carbon-copy run by Gary Macleod ended in a right-footer from 24 metres roaring just outside the right junction on Beaton's bar and post. On 39 minutes, a lucky ricochet sent Fraz Mac behind the line into the box but a lightning intervention by the keeper took advantage of a stumble to block brilliantly, and the breaking ball was booted clear. A Macleod free-kick from the halfway line was headed on by Rudall on the edge of the box but Beaton rushed out to be first to it.

On the stroke of half-time Fraz Mac robbed a defender on the left bye-line, moved in unmarked, drew the unprotected Macritchie, and slipped the ball home neatly from 12 metres, between near post and keeper. Congratulations all round, then everyone's attention was drawn to the stand-side linesman's raised flag. No goal! Apparently, there had been an earlier off-side on the left touchline, unnoticed by everyone - except the stand-side linesman.

Half-Time: Athletic 0 Carloway 1

The margin at 45 minutes was probably appropriate: so far, na Gormaich had successfully stifled Aths' forwards, but not their midfield; Aths' back-men, however, had struggled to contain Crossley and Macaulay; with the peripatetic "Gochan" and turbo-fuelled Fraz Mac especially difficult to nail down. Suddenly, on 53 minutes, it became that bit harder for them when an electrifying Blues' move down the left through Macaulay doubled the lead. He reached the left side of the box and his quick-fire head-high cross square was met by "Gochan" rushing towards him to back-head onwards to the arriving Fraz Mac on the right side of the goal, who fired a first-time right-footer from 12 metres to the helpless keeper's left (2-0). An absolute peach of a move!

Moments later, a "D.I." ball through the centre sent Macleod clear into the box once more but Macritchie safely gathered his mishit shot. Finally, on 57 minutes, a way back for the Stornoway boys: a free-kick on the front left edge of the box. However, Gary Macleod struck the wall; he then struck the rebound against the wall, and it was cleared. Two minutes later another Macleod free-kick, 20 metres out on the left, rebounded clear for a long ball to be sent to "Gochan" breaking left but his cross was headed over by Macleod from 12 metres. On the hour a loose ball from a cross on the right was hit first-time on the left by Fraz Mac but his right-foot snapshot flew just outside Macritchie's right-hand post.

With the clock running down and na Gormaich clearly satisfied with the night's work, Athletic now went for it. On 70 minutes Scott Maciver managed to wriggle free on the left touch-line, run and cut in, to supply Davis square, but his drive from 24 metres flew a metre over the bar. Three minutes later another Maciver run in from the left against a retreating defence allowed him to advance to 20 metres out, then send a glorious pin-point pass to the right to find an unmarked Macleod racing in diagonally from the right corner of the box; but Beaton reacted swiftly to advance and block him brilliantly for a corner. The resultant corner was nodded just over from 16 metres.

On 75 minutes the evening was settled. Dan Crossley, just inside the Blues' half, facing his own goal, won a tussle for the ball., He was forced back under pressure, managed to make space to turn, then looked up to see the advancing Aths' back-line leaving one man centrally on Fraz Mac, the only two men inside the Goathill Road half. His quick-fire inch-perfect de Boer special, all of 30 metres, dropped behind the lone defender for Macleod to charge in unhindered on goal. Nevertheless, Macritchie somehow contrived to block him magnificently with an outstretched hand just inside the box, as he tried to round him on the left, but the breaking ball still carried to him leftish of goal, 12 metres from the bye-line. He gathered it, steadied himself, then hooked it carefully with his right-foot between the arriving defender and near post for his 9th of the season (**3-0**).

Understandably, the game lost its impetus considerably. Two minutes later an Aths' corner on the right came in low for Rudall to touch past the near post from 8 metres. Then on 85 minutes another mazy Crossley dribble down the left took him to the bye-line, then inwards to lay back to Seumas Macleod, but he lifted his attempt over from 16 metres. Two minutes later, with Aths committed *en masse* up front, Carloway broke clear into their unguarded half, 3-on-1, swift inter-passing leaving "Dokus" free on Macritchie, but again the keeper was up to it, miraculously blocking 12 metres out from goal.

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

The attributes so efficient thus far in delivering success in the opening matches delivered again tonight: faultless defending was enabled by line-holding marshal, Gus Maciver, assisted by the steadiness of Calum Tom Moody and "D.I." Maclennan, the latter twice the defender he was last season. This forced the marauding Scott Maciver and "Mojo" Maclean deeper than normal, although quality performers of this calibre always threaten. Control of the midfield battleground, where most ties are decided, saw "Sqweg" support breaking midfielder and captain, Domhnall Mackay, to combat his opposite number, Elliot Rudall, and facilitate the insightful spreading play of Billy Anderson and high-speed imaginative running and lay-offs of Dan Crossley.

Nic Davis and D.J. Clinton struggled to realise their creativity, and this in turn meant the running menace of Scott Maciver from wide midfield to front centre and the encroachment of Gary Macleod on the right remained relatively unignited for long periods. The powerful forward running of Scott Macaulay, crucial in such a no-quarter-given body-cruncher as this, offset the relentless pace and movement of Fraz Mac and "Gochan", who repeatedly stretched Aths' back-line, wide and long, and might have had more joy, except for the class of Colin Macritchie. Early enthusiasm, and absence of injury, ensures total player availability. The hectic fixture list might dent such circumstances, plus regular departures for employment, education, etc., but at the moment Carloway look well-placed, for the opening period at least.

Athletic Man of the Match: Colin Macritchie.

[Carloway](#) Man of the Match: [Dan Crossley](#).