

## Highland Amateur Cup Round 1:

# Carloway 3 (1) Ness 0 (0)

Own Goal (Neil Morrison). 26

Domhnall Mackay 65

Calum Tom Moody 90

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Saturday, 4.5.13.

Ref.: Calum "Chancey" Macleod.

David Beaton

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

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

Scott Macaulay Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald

Subs.: Kevin "Gochan" Macleod (Billy Anderson) 61; Kevin "Barra" Macneil (Dan Crossley) 77; Craig Hacker (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 82.

Sub. not used: Colin Maclean.

Already this was the clubs' second meeting of the season, this time in a Highland-wide cup which Carloway has lately approached with a potent mixture of hope and apprehension, since their first successful mainland foray in June 2008. A 5-1 victory that month at Culbokie over Halkirk, led to a first-ever Quarter-Final appearance three weeks later, which unfortunately ended in a 3-4 extra-time defeat to Castletown in Fortrose. An unlucky 2-3 Round 1 defeat to Southend the following year led to further glory in 2010, a 3-1 away victory over today's opponents leading to a 6-0 mauling of North Uist United in Lionacleit, before a hard-fought Round 3 defeat to Golspie Stafford in Culbokie, 3-5.

However, it was the following year's Cup run that has become the stuff of fondest memory and whetted a permanent Club appetite for mainland glory. An initial bye led to a resounding 2-1 victory over then L. & H. League champions, Lochs, at Leurbost, featuring an unforgettable 30-metre winner from Andrew "Tago" Maciver. A 4-0 revenge victory over 2008 Caithness conquerors, Castletown, followed at Fortrose, before an equally comprehensive 5-1 thrashing of Orkney hopefuls, Kirkwall Rovers, in Maryburgh. Next up were perennial Cup winners, Avoch, in Ullapool, but despite competing hard with the Black Isle men, and Kenny "Dokus" scoring yet another cracker moving in from the right which rivalled his opener in the previous round, the Blues were eventually worn down 1-3.

However, a benchmark had been set, making last season's Round 2 exit to lochdar Saints on penalties at Lionacleit all the more painful. So, HAC glory beckoned, once more. Unfortunately, there was the small matter of the Niseachs to deal with first, and, if successful, after that, the Hearachs. The 3-0 League victory over Ness had been a much harder game than the final score suggests. Although there had been little direct attacking threat from Ness until late, it had been a tiring war of attrition in which na Gormaich had had to put in a non-stop 95-minute shift to prevail.

Like life itself, nothing is "easy" in football. It also had to be remembered that the last time Ness visited Cnoc a' Choilich on Cup business, last July, they had triumphed 2-1 in an EaF SF Leg 1. Two stars were absent today, off island: Fraser Macleod (Carloway) and Andrew "Bubble" Macleod (Ness), while Kevin "Gochan" Macleod arrived moments before kick-off and was advised take a place in the bull-pen, beside Kevin "Barra" Macneil, Craig Hacker, and Colin Maclean. Seumas Macleod was to patrol the right, with Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald pushing forward, alongside Scott Macaulay.

Once again, there were three participants in an island match, the narrative being, "*He who harnesses the wind, wins the game.*" A shower-spattered, howling sou-westerly dampened

creativity and fast co-ordinated movement and, although both teams attempted to play low and neat, Ness, with the gale behind them, repeatedly overshot any higher ball forward, while Carloway struggled to establish a cohesive rhythm. In 3 minutes a Niseach break down the left did see Rush-Taylor flight in a reasonable cross but Beaton reacted first to hold. On 16 minutes a breaking Macaulay was hauled down on the right edge of the box and the Blues tried to be inventive. "Dokus" joined the left of the wall; Anderson lined up to drive, but simply slipped it forward to Macaulay/Macleod? facing him, who flicked it rightwards to "Dokus", who had immediately moved to the right of the wall; but Ness were alive to the ruse smartly. "Dokus" was blocked 8 metres out; his second attempt was blocked and the rebound whacked off him and past.

On 19 minutes a swift move forward against a committed defence gave Dunlop a sight of goal centrally but his drive from 22 metres took off in the wind. A minute later "Dokus" was released down the left, and 20 metres from the bye-line, sent in a high diagonal cross towards the rushing Macaulay, who took it beautifully on the volley, 12 metres from goal to the right. However, it lacked power and Macsween read it well low to his left. Another dangerous cross/shot from the Niseach right, 20 metres from goal, was lifted on to the roof of Beaton's net, before Lady Fortune turned her back on the Greens.

On 24 minutes a golden diagonal from Mackay/Anderson? saw Macleod scamper down the right, control carefully, 10 metres from the bye-line, then send in a vicious, low, square pass to the arriving Macaulay by the near post; but the speed of the ball tricked the striker and his marker, clicked onwards off his boot, and struck the unfortunate Morrison behind him below the knee, to cannon into the net on "Sweeney's" right (1-0).

It was a goal out of nothing; the pattern of the game remained unchanged, with both sides continuing to toil, relatively unsuccessfully, to create openings. On 28 minutes another Macaulay break on the right saw his attempted cross rebound backwards to "Sqweg", but his quick-fire cross found no takers. Four minutes later Ness's first real chance arrived when a searching diagonal from the right just carried too strongly for the arriving Russell-Smith, unmarked by the far post, and his attempted overhead kick, 12 metres from goal, slipped weakly past. On 36 minutes a Ness corner on the right was headed just over by Dunlop from 12 metres, and then the industrious Macaulay once more fought his way down the right, checked, cut in, and drove towards the near post, but Macsween anticipated it correctly.

On 40 minutes Carloway created the chance to create daylight between the teams. A "Dokus" move down the right saw him check 12 metres from the bye-line, double back, then send in a glorious left-foot cross high into the box. Crossley brought it down expertly with his chest on the penalty spot, looked up quickly, and then spoilt the party by sending a right-foot rocket over "Sweeney's" bar. And it could have got harder for na Gormaich one minute into added-on time: a beautiful Rush-Taylor free-kick 24 metres from goal, to the right, soared over the defensive line for Dunlop to lead a trio of breaking Niseachs to head home clinically to the helpless Beaton's left. Like Wednesday night at Goathill, it looked legitimate. However, once again, a linesman's flag was up. Apparently, the Ness men had taken a step too soon, before the ball had been struck. No wonder the Ness boys looked at the heavens, after this 45 minutes.

**Half-Time: Carloway 1 Ness 0.**

It had been an even first-half between sides mainly employing similar ground-level, short-passing styles, although the Blues had looked more dangerous, usually when resorting to their trademark diagonal defence-splitters. High balls either way had been useless. Immediately, Carloway changed their strategy, visibly determined to use the wind, via over-the-defence balls and shoot-on-sight tactics. A heavy push forward had clearly been decided over the half-time Lucozade. A break on the left saw the ball whipped into the box, then relayed onwards to

Seumas Macleod coming in fast on the right but his snapshot from 16 metres was brilliantly tipped on to the top of the bar and over by "Sweeney".

Ness replied with a Rush-Taylor corner on the right which came across head-high and skided backwards of a lunging Carloway head to Stephen Boyd coming in fast in the centre, but his bullet-header zoomed just over from 12 metres. On 49 minutes Crossley tried his luck from 24 metres but his hopeful attempt flew a metre over the bar.

Then, in the best move so far in the game, a swift inter-passing movement from Crossley, Macaulay, and "Dokus", recalling David Martin, Nomie, and "Lava" in their heyday Lochs days, ended with Crossley releasing Macaulay to the left bye-line, and his perfect low cross being fired just outside Macsween's right-hand post by "Dokus". At last, the Blues were using the wind profitably, and the pace and aggression of substitute, "Gochan" was clearly registering. On 61 minutes Scott MacAulay met a "Dokus" cross from the right in the box, 14 metres out, but headed out wide to the right. A minute later "Sweeney" nearly had egg on his face when his duffed goal-kick was returned *tout de suite* by "Dokus" from 20 metres but reacted magnificently to get across and back in time to tip over his bar. From the resultant Macaulay corner on the right, "Gochan" headed just past from 12 metres in the centre.

Then a piece of opportunism from Domhnall Mackay gave na Gormaich a cushion: the Niseachs began a move out of defence on the right but a loose pass on the centre line into the centre was intercepted by the Carloway captain. Mackay took a few paces forward, then from 30 metres thwacked forward a low daisy-cutter, which was accelerated by the gale low past an unsighted keeper to his right (2-0).

A minute later "Gochan" escaped his marker on the right but the wind sped the racing ball away from him and over the bye-line; and then "Sweeney" had to move, yet again, to tip a flighted wind-borne ball on to his bar and away. From the Crossley corner on the left, Moody reverse-headed down to Mackay but his reaction header whizzed over from 12 metres.

Ness were still playing neatly from the back but lack of a wise, older head in central midfield (a Cheocaidh, maybe?) or a target up front meant all the Russell-Smith-led ingenuity fizzled out 20 metres from the Carloway goal. On 76 minutes the indomitable Macaulay burst through the centre like a force of nature, then laid off to "Gochan", 20 metres from goal but his low drive crept outside Macsween's right-hand post. Three minutes later Russell-Smith shot over Ness's last real opportunity from 22 metres in the centre. A minute later a short corner by Macaulay on the left, returned to him by "Gochan", was fired across high to the far post, but Moody headed straight to "Sweeney" at the near post from 14 metres.

The game was clearly winding down when the irrepressible "Gochan" broke down the left on 86 minutes and into the box, but his shot from 20 metres was pushed away for a corner by the keeper. Then out of nowhere, for the third time this afternoon, Carloway grabbed another, to clinch the tie. Macaulay, evidently not switched off yet, forced his way down the left, more through defenders than round them, to the bye-line, then turned inwards. His release sped across goal, 12 metres out, escaping everyone to travel to Moody coming in on the right, and he stroked the ball home past the unguarded Macsween (3-0).

**Full-Time: Carloway 3 Ness 0**

Not the most entertaining match to watch, and most likely to compete in, due to the rather awkward conditions both sides had to endure. Nevertheless, the Blues should look on this as a satisfactory, if uninspired, afternoon's work. As in the previous fixture, there was little direct attacking threat from Ness (how they need a striker!), yet it was an exhausting afternoon, as Ness's young bucks made Carloway run and compete throughout, though, perhaps, it was this

same youth that meant the Blues could handle them reasonably comfortably when they passed their way forward. Lack of guile and a front man cost the Niseachs, though Calum Morrison(?), Boyd, Neil Morrison, and Rush-Taylor protected Macsween well (until the wind took over). The goalkeeper was alert and decisive, and Russell-Smith relentlessly involved and inventive as *animateur*.

However, the Seumas Macleod/Mackay/Anderson/"Sqweg"/Crossley midfield exercised a powerful influence in Carloway's favour throughout, as it has done in the first five games, though with slightly-changing personnel. Also, with Macleod falling back as required to support Gus Maciver and "D.I.", Moody was allowed frequently to make it six in the middle for most of the second half. In addition, the introduction of the unstoppable single-minded pace of "Gochan" on the hour racked up the pressure on the Niseach midfield and defence, though, till then, Scott Macaulay had played as if he felt obligated personally to make up for Fraser Macleod's and "Gochan's" absences.

**Carloway Man of the Match: Scott Macaulay.**

**Ness Man of the Match: Micheil Russell-Smith**