

Lewis and Harris League:

Carloway 7 (5)

Fraser Macleod 6, 38, 42, 70, 88
Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 24
Calum Tom Moody 40

United 1 (0)

Jamie Feeney 52

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Monday, 13.5.13.

Ref.: George Macaskill.

David Beaton

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

Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Seumas Macleod Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod Dan Crossley
Scott Macaulay Fraser Macleod

Subs.: Kevin "Barra" Macneil (Scott Macaulay) 56; Craig Hacker (Donald "D.I." MacIennan) 56; Colin Maclean (Dan Crossley) 68.

Sub. not used: Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald; James Anderson.

After the heady - if rather damp - euphoria of Friday night's Cup glory, a much more mundane, and wetter, task faced Carloway tonight: the quest for League points in order to remain a member of the leading pack of title contenders, beside Athletic and West Side. In a 9-club League, of course, every point is vital and even an early couple of reverses can seriously, if not terminally, damage any such aspirations. Lesson 1 must surely be: if the others don't lose, neither must you.

Tonight the visitors were United, to whom the Blues had passed on the dreaded mantra, "----- *haven't won a trophy since -----* ", in United's case, 1976, in the Lewis Cup; the Summer Cup was won by them the previous year; before that, a record to turn the Blues green with envy, five successive League Championships, from 1958 to 1962, something still well out of reach down Carloway way. Not that the Wasps are likely to add a sixth this season, after a poor start to their League season: 4 straight defeats, 19 goals lost. The last time the Stornoway team tasted League victory here was in 2009, when goals from Calum Campbell (pen.), D.J.Clinton, and Alan Don Mackenzie secured a 3-1 win, Billy Anderson scoring for the home side and Andrew "Tago" Maciver "enjoying" an early bath. Carloway's goalkeeper that night? Gordon "Gordy" Mackenzie!

Since then, Cnoc a' Choilich has failed to be a field of joy for the Wasps, however, losing 4-1, 2-0, and 3-2 over the following years. Tonight, an unfamiliar, distinctly youthful, United confronted Carloway as Stuart "Bubble" Macdonald was now with Athletic; Tom Lawrence has gone; Liam Coleman and Sandy Morrison were absent, though National Treasure, Gordon "Gordy" Mackenzie, again featured between the sticks; and Jamie Feeney, Kenny 'Tolsta' Maclean, and Kevin Macmillan turned out before him. Apart from Norman Macleod, the rest were teenagers: three of them: Scott Montgomery, Ross Allison, and the substitute, Seumas Maciver, only 15, James Macaulay a year older.

Na Gormaich's only difficulties were the absences of Billy Anderson and Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald, both with hamstring problems. This meant Seumas Macleod came off the bench to central midfield and the Blues began proceedings in what looked like a 3-5-2 formation.

If any tourist had the misfortune to stop by Cnoc a' Choilich tonight and ask why the local season was just beginning, the first reason given would probably be on account of summer light, the second because of the island's winter weather made a traditional season unplayable. He might then have looked around himself with bemusement, at the few spectators huddled in padded boiler suits against the clubhouse walls, then at 22 miserable, soaking young men trying to bestow some order on an aerial balloon, mainly without using their hands, as a

howling, swirling sou'westerly drove successive crescendos of hail, sleet, and snow into their faces. "*What on earth is it like up here at midwinter?*", he would feel forced to ask next. Even the substitutes for both sides huddled among the "crowd".

United had the added misfortune of facing the gale in the first half. Immediately, largely because of this, they were under pressure: in 3 minutes a "Gochan" run down the right saw his squared cross, 12 metres from the bye-line, side-footed over the bar by Seumas Macleod in front of goal. Three minutes later Macaulay was free on the right but his shot from the right edge of the box flew off a defender for a corner. His beautifully-flighted left-foot corner harnessed the wind perfectly to whiz in under the United bar where Seumas Macleod, on the line, touched it on for Fraser Macleod to nod home (**1-0**).

A dominant pattern had been set. On 10 minutes a long flighted ball forward over United's high back-line, clearly Carloway's preferred tactic for the circumstances, saw Fraz Mac racing in yet again, this time into the right of the box but "Gordy" was out like a flash to block; the high spinning ball was caught by the wind and blown back fast toward the goal, but somehow Maclean (?) raced back in time to beat "Gochan" to it and clear high off the line for a corner. United simply could not contain or threaten, with any forward movement foundering midway into the Blues' half. Carloway would then play it around at the back in the Spanish style, before Mackay, "Sqweg", or Moody released a long high or low splitter forward for Macaulay or Macleod to break at pace, or Crossley or "Gochan" to run the line. Any attempt to clear high was simply blown back.

On 19 minutes a Fraz Mac free-kick from 24 metres on the left caused confusion in the Wasps' box; a Macaulay free-kick from the same position broke off the wall inwards and led to a scramble in the area. On 23 minutes "D.I." sent a peach low through the line from the halfway line for Fraser Macleod to run on into the left corner of the box, but as Mackenzie closed the angle, he side-footed his cross-shot just outside the far post. A minute later "D.I." again sent the ball forward, this time to "Sqweg", 22 metres out leftish, and he flicked the ball on to the breaking Fraz Mac. On the left side of the box he fired a square ball in to the unmarked "Gochan". Again, Mackenzie was fast to block, but the rebound fell back to "Gochan", who tapped home inside the left-hand post (**2-0**).

United were now losing shape dangerously at the back, as the midfield failed to compete. On 29 minutes the fast forward ball sent "Gochan" into the box but he was blocked 14 metres out in the centre, reversed, then saw his left-foot drive savagely deflected away from the goalie, on to Mackenzie's left-hand post and past. Over-elaboration at the Carloway back, gave Chris Wood a glimmer of hope but he was crowded out on the edge of the box.

Then a seven-minute period saw the game spin wildly out of United's reach. On 38 minutes Seumas Macleod in the centre on the halfway line, chipped forward left for Macaulay to run to the left edge of the box, then curve a chip wide to the left of the advancing "Gordy" for the racing Fraz Mac to fire home at the far post from 6 metres (**3-0**). A minute later Macaulay received the ball back from a corner on the right, then flighted it in for a group of Blues' heads, 12 metres out centrally, to flick right of the keeper; but Mackenzie brilliantly blocked with his outstretched right hand for a corner. However, Crossley's corner from the left broke along the 6-metre box for Moody to force home by the far post (**4-0**). Then Mackay won the ball in the centre and sent the diagonal forward to Macaulay free on the right; his quick-fire diagonal across the box allowed Fraser Macleod to slide past "Gordy's" left hand and inside the post from 14 metres (**5-0**).

Half-Time: Carloway 5 United 0.

What words of advice can you offer to a group of teenagers, 0-5 at half-time? At least the wind -

and everything borne by the wind - was behind them in the second half, and this certainly reduced the frequency of the Carloway surges. On 48 minutes a breaking "Gochan" played the ball fast down the right to Fraz Mac and his deep cross saw the arriving Crossley at the far post head wide and high from 10 metres.

Four minutes later and a moment of inspired opportunism saw the Wasps rewarded. As na Gormaich organised their wall against a free-kick 24 metres out on the left, Jamie Feeney walked up and first-timed a right-foot snapshot to curl round the left of the wall and home, with Beaton unaware the ball had even been struck (**5-1**).

Intermittent chances still arrived for the Blues: on 56 minutes a Moody through ball sent Fraz Mac in to slide wide from 18 metres. On 62 minutes "Gochan" escaped clear on the right but Mackenzie held his low shot from 16 metres safely by the near post. A minute later a "Gochan" low cross 12 metres from the bye-line, squared through a crowded area to Mackay, who stepped right and drove the ball hard and low past "Gordy's" left-hand post.

On 70 minutes a Carloway burst forward through the centre saw Mackay move a fast straight ball forward to Fraz Mac to drive home, hard and low, inside Mackenzie's left-hand post from 12 metres in the centre (**6-1**). Three minutes later Moody, 10 metres within the United half, sent a high diagonal left for Fraser Macleod to right-foot beyond the far post from 16 metres. A final chance appeared for United in 76 minutes but a push through the centre eventually lost the ball in a scramble in the centre of the Carloway area, then the attempted clearance rebound dangerously of an attacker to shoot past Beaton's left-hand post from 14 metres.

The game was certainly running down when United's misery was complete: on 88 minutes a "Gochan" corner swung in low from the left and Fraser Macleod got the slightest touch at ground-level by the near post to help it home (**7-1**).

Full-Time: Carloway 7 United 1.

On a night like this, you begin to question the sanity of the human race; the male half of the species, anyway. What point is there in such a meeting on a night like this? What fun or pleasure for players, officials, or spectators? The elements should not play a major role in sports contests but on a night like this it was clear that whoever worked the wind better would win the game.

Carloway adapted their game more to suit the conditions more profitably than United. The youth and inexperience of the visitors was eventually overpowered by the pace and tactics of the home side, turbo-charged by adrenalin, after their ABC victory, and driven by an implacable hurricane in the first half. At most, United threatened half a dozen times throughout the game, while Carloway's intelligent use of the long ball and fast diagonal provided repeated opportunity for Scott Macaulay, Fraser Macleod, and "Gochan" to run, and run, and run at an overstretched defence. Thankfully for the visitors, na Gormaich were playing in the same circumstances as they were and eventually ran out of steam, due to their first-half exertions but also the general bruised atmosphere of depressing weather. Wise men say you must suffer to learn; one can only hope that this is true and the United young-bloods are able, in retrospect, to look on this as a rather painful learning experience and, as they say, come back stronger.

Carloway Man of the Match: Fraser Macleod.

United Man of the Match: Kenny 'Tolsta' Maclean