

Lewis and Harris League:

Carloway 2 (0) West Side 1 (0)

Fraser Macleod 55, 79 (pen.) Duncan Maclean 90+1

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Wednesday, 15.5.13.

Ref.: D.J. Maclean (Bragar).

Standside Line Judge: N. Macritchie.

Farside Line Judge: P. Forster.

David Beaton

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

Kevin "Gochan" Macleod ☒ Domhnall Mackay(capt.) Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Seumas Macleod Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod

Scott Macaulay Fraser Macleod

Subs.: Dan Crossley (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 45; Ben Smith (Fraser Macleod) 90+4.

Subs. not used: Kevin "Barra" Macneil; Craig Hacker; Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur

Yellow cards: Donald "D.I." MacIennan 35; Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 45; Gus Maciver 90.

Scott Graham Innes Iain Morrison

Martainn Shields Donald "Spike" Smith(capt.) John Campbell Ali "Barvas" Macleod

Duncan Maclean Ally Williamson Donnie "No" Smith Gordon Campbell ☒

Gordon Craigie

Subs.: Martin Stewart (Ali "Barvas" Macleod) 45; Cameron Macdonald (Gordon Campbell) 83; Andy "Barvas" Macleod (Martainn Shields) 89.

Yellow card: Gordon Campbell 46.

Before:

Team	Play ed	Won	Dra wn	Lost	For	Agai nst	+/-	Points
CARLOWAY	4	4	0	0	19	2	17	12
Westside	4	4	0	0	17	4	13	12
Stornoway Athletic	3	3	0	0	15	3	12	9

Well, what better timing could there be for a West Lewis derby: both sides unbeaten, 4 League games played, jointly leading the table, the hosts having won 8 straight League and Cup games; Barvas's best having experienced only one reverse: at Col Uarach in the ABC. Perhaps the Blues might have preferred to face their bitterest rivals later, rather than immediately after a Monday League game versus United and a strenuous Cup Final against the Bacachs the Friday before (both in extreme conditions) and an HAC Round 2 in Tarbert coming up two days later. West's less hectic preparation for the derby might have been reflected in tonight's first half proceedings, but can't explain the progress of the second. Reserves of energy seem always to be available when a neighbouring team needs smacked down.

Last season treated the fans to four memorable collisions of skill, bone-jarring tackles, and bad temper, plus liberal displays of the yellow card. In July a Dan Crossley-inspired comeback at the Showground saw a Martainn Shields double overhauled by four goals from "Gochan", "Dokus", Crossley himself, and "Tolsta"; only for West to return the favour twice later in the season. First, there was gut-wrenching defeat for na Gormaich in the EaF Final at Fivepenny, when an early Billy Anderson bullet inspired Carloway to hope for that elusive first Cup success in 55 years, before second half strikes by "Doug" Maciver and Scott Maciver reduced that

dream to ashes. West's 5-2 thrashing of their neighbours at Cnoc a' Choilich merely twisted the knife further, especially the fact that the men of Barvas barely broke sweat achieving it.

By the time the two adversaries lined up in Coll in September in the Moldova Lewis Final, the Blues were positively light-hearted, having removed the yoke of Cup under-achievement at Garrabost versus Back in a shoot-out, their mood even lighter when they discovered that twin thorns in the flesh, Ali "Barvas" Macleod and D.J. Clinton, were unable to feature that night. A game of alternating fortunes finally led to a second Cup penalty shoot-out by candlelight and night goggles, and a second Cup for the Blues.

So, both sides have been successful in Cups in the last few years. Is a New Firm appearing in the West, to rival, hopefully supplant, the Old Firm in the East: Lochs; Back; Athletic; and Point? When can one, or both, of these sides, reach the pinnacle? The Championship? Both are certainly good enough. No surprises in the West formation tonight, though Dan Macphail and Johnny Wallace were absent; Innes Iain Morrison continued in the forward role Clinton had vacated, though a new young star was blooded between the posts. Carloway's line-up also more or less picked itself, though it was decided to start Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald in central midfield, and rest Dan Crossley to the bench, where young stars, Ben Smith and Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur, made a first welcome appearance beside Kevin "Barra" Macneil and Craig Hacker.

Thankfully, the night was wind-less, almost late Spring-like, and the fans were able at last to turn out in reasonable numbers. After all, who wants to miss a Carloway/West Side scrap - a highlight of the Lewis Events Calendar? Immediately West Side sought to entertain them further. A high ball forward into the right of the Blues' box caught the Carloway defence cold and it broke off heads to Ali "Barvas", 16 metres out on the right. He body-swerved left for a square lay-off to the unmarked Morrison arriving at speed to slip past the rushing Beaton; but the keeper read him brilliantly, stuck out his right foot, and the ball cannoned away to safety. What a let-off!

A rattled Blues stumbled around, as a sharper West pressed: on 7 minutes a Maclean free-kick from 20 metres on the right curled in and again Beaton had to look alert to block at the near post. A series of dangerous Maclean corners from the right ensued, dropped beautifully under the Carloway bar, and were scrambled away anywhere each time. "D.I." couldn't pin down Ali "Barvas" (who can?) on the right; while the crucial battleground in the middle was consistently being won by the faster-reacting, incisive tackling, and early lay-offs of "Spike" and John Campbell. At present, all roads led to David Beaton. Fouls proliferated in dangerous positions. On 13 minutes another Maclean free-kick from the halfway line broke right to Ali "Barvas", 14 metres out, and again Beaton had to beat his low drive away for a corner.

Finally, a chance for na Gormaich: a "Dokus" free-kick on the right edge of the box resulted in a "Gochan" header deflected right for a corner. Three minutes later Craigie was finally called into action by sprinting to the edge of the box to boot clear from a chasing Fraser Macleod; but a minute later another golden opportunity arrived for West: yet another Maclean free-kick, just inside the Carloway half, on the left touch-line, came over perfectly for Scott Graham, 12 metres out centrally, to ghost off his marker to meet, but his header was not angled sufficiently to Beaton's right and the keeper held safely at shoulder-height. Moments later, "Dokus" was sent clear into the left of the West box, but Craigie reacted expertly to dash out to save bravely at the forward's feet.

Then within two minutes another two glorious opportunities for the Siarachs: a move down the right saw the ball squared across the Carloway area to Morrison 16 metres out. He took one step forward, then thwacked a right-foot rocket inches over the bar. Next, Campbell won a forward ball to head on and through to Ali "Barvas" steaming into the box from the right. His

early shot forced Beaton to parry at full-strength to his right but the arriving Graham had over-anticipated and could only stretch back to snatch the ball past the keeper's right-hand post.

Carloway simply could not establish themselves in midfield, usually their strongest point. Fortunately for Carloway, Martainn Shields was starved, as "Spike" *et al* concentrated right to supply the unplayable Ali Macleod; as "D.I." struggled, Maciver and Moody were drawn left and Morrison and Graham found increasing space, while Mackay and "Sqweg" dropped back in support, further allowing "Spike" and Campbell to encroach and control.

On the stroke of half-time a final opening: Carloway cleared at random and the line moved forward; suddenly, the ball was returned high behind the line and Morrison was played on by the broken line. He moved in and from the edge of the box attempted to chip the approaching keeper, but Beaton just managed to touch the ball down sideways and the rushing "D.I." booted it all the way to St. Kilda.

Half-Time: Carloway 0 West Side 0.

Blues' fans must have been wondering which agent of the Devil Carloway had signed a deal with to permit them to emerge in the second half, still on equal terms. Only the brilliance of David Beaton's reactions had kept them alive, together with some bad luck for the visitors and uncharacteristic slack finishing. Even better luck descended from the heavens for na Gormaich in the second half with the news that their main tormentor, Ali "Barvas" Macleod, was unable to continue. Kevin Anderson and Graeme Miller realised that desperate times needed desperate measures: "Dokus" took an early shower, and Carloway's own secret weapon, Dan Crossley, was invited to kick-start the stuttering engine-room.

The pattern of the game gradually but discernibly changed, and it soon became apparent that the Blues were gaining a foothold in midfield. Crossley was intended to run, à la David Hay, at "Spike" and Campbell, with Mackay and "Sqweg" in support. Meantime, Lewis's best right-half/wing had vanished; "D.I." could read Martin Stewart, thus Maciver and Moody could concentrate on Graham and Morrison. The central battleground moved forward from Beaton.

On 50 minutes, a heart-stopping moment for the Siarachs. "Sqweg" broke into the West half on the right and his straight splitter before him released Macaulay to cross low and square, 14 metres from the bye-line. It beat Macleod and Smith at the near post and carried on to whack off Williamson and backwards to Craigie's right. Amazingly, our own special Van Der Sar got down to clutch the ball as it was crossing the line.

Four minutes later and what at one time had seemed unthinkable happened: a typical Crossley run through the centre and shot from the edge of the box was deflected for a corner on the left. Macaulay's corner was punched back to him by Craigie, but his perfect return broke outwards from a clutch of heads to Fraz Mac in the centre, 10 metres out, and he promptly did what he does best and thumped the ball high into the net (**1-0**).

The Carloway celebrations suggested disbelief at such a salvation, this turnaround, but the momentum infield had visibly been swinging their way, though clear-cut chances still remained few for either side. The Carloway defence were now back in their comfort zone and could afford to lean on the midfield to cut the supply line to Graham and Morrison, while pushing to send Crossley forward and to release Macaulay. Yet Smith, Williamson, and Maclean were equally solid, their marking dogged and heavy, so the Blues' trademark pace up front continued to be denied opportunity. Both sides were simply too good for each other.

On 66 minutes, a chance of a Siarachs' resurrection appeared: a disputed free-kick on the right edge of the Carloway box, but "Spike's" effort was blocked and the resulting scramble came to

nothing. On 74 minutes a delicately-flighted free-kick by "Sqweg" from 28 metres on the left was headed just over by Seumas Macleod from 16 metres. Two minutes later a short corner on the right was crossed diagonally to "Sqweg" to blast high over from 20 metres.

Then the defining moment of the match: a high ball from the left seemed to escape Craigie and a crowd of players in the West 6-metre box and fly past to the Carloway right and "Gochan" ended up prone on the goal-line. The referee immediately pointed to the spot, Duncan Maclean having been adjudged to have elbowed him in the back to prevent him reaching the cross. Craigie guessed left; Fraz Mac fired low and hard to the right (**2-0**).

A minute later Maclean almost redeemed himself, when his swirling diagonal free-kick from the left touch-line deceived everyone, including Beaton, running behind the line but crept agonisingly outside the far post. Na Gormaich had two further chances to kill the contest stone-dead: on 81 minutes Craigie had to react smartly to cut off a through ball to Fraser Macleod, then three minutes later a move from the left set up Moody, 22 metres out centrally, but he sliced wide to the right.

As Macaulay, Fraz Mac, and "Sqweg" ran the clock down expertly by both corner flags, a glimmer of hope did appear for the Siarachs in added-on time: a Maclean free-kick just outside the right edge of the box took a nasty deflection left of Beaton, as he was moving to his left to cover comfortably (**2-1**). The Carloway fans had even yet another five added-on minutes to endure but, try as they might, the Siarachs were unable to fashion another goalmouth threat.

Full-Time: Carloway 2 West Side 1.

Quite a night! It certainly proved there is hope for the game as spectacle if a thinly-populated island like this can produce such a tense and enthralling evening, featuring skill, imagination, and commitment, by chosen representatives of two neighbouring townships. At times, it featured electrifying displays of quick-thinking imagination and insightful talent skills; at other times what passed as unarmed combat, reminiscent of mediaeval warfare.

The question of "*desert*" obviously came up at its end. Was this "*daylight robbery*?" Should Carloway have been dead and buried by half-time? Should West Side really have lost? Probably, yes and no to all the questions. It's football, you know. You either win or you don't. What might have been doesn't compute. Carloway "*deserved*" to win, in the sense that they scored twice, West only once. The game was a classic demonstration of the old adage, "*A game of two halves*". In the first, West had at least six golden chances to send the Blues packing, one as early as the second minute. Yet they passed them all up. Then Ali "Barvas" departed; Dan Crossley arrived, and the impetus towards a "*result*" inexorably travelled south along the coast.

Na Gormaich didn't create as many, or as good, chances as West Side, but with a predator like Fraser Macleod around, you don't have to. Tonight, a reality check for Carloway; perhaps, they are not yet as good as they thought they were or, no doubt, will be; West Side, that they may be better than they realise. The Siarachs easily managed to disturb an equilibrium which has swept aside Lochs twice, Athletic, Back, Ness, and United - a Carloway side with a stable, solid defensive structure; a blanket half-back line, which creates fast, forceful aggression; and a pacy, shape-shifting forward line; and West managed to disturb this equilibrium with their familiar tightly-organized team performance, combative and fast-reacting at the back and in midfield; using the unpredictable creativity of a gifted wing-man, to supply two prowling hit-men up front. They "*deserved*" better, but there can only be one winner, and that is the team that scores the goals!

Carloway Man of the Match: David Beaton.

