

Jock Stein Cup Semi-Final:

**Ness 3 (0) Carloway 5 (1) (After extra-time; 3-3 at full-time)**

Lee Johnson 70, 80  
Craig Harris 72

Scott Macaulay 14  
Fraser Macleod 59  
Stephen Boyd o.g. 85  
Kenny "Beag" MacLennan 108  
Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald 116

At Fivepenny.

Monday, 9.6.13.

Ref.: Calum "Chancey" Macleod.

Standside line judge: Neil Macritchie.

Farside line judge: Paul Forster.

David Beaton

Andrew "Tago" Maciver Calum Tom Moody Seumas Macleod

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

Subs.: Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald (Billy Anderson) 75; Kenny "Beag" MacLennan (Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod) 83;  
Kevin "Barra" Macneil (Domhnall Mackay) 90.

Subs. not used: Craig Hacker; Gus Maciver.

Yellow card: Kevin "Gochan" Macleod.

For a decade the Blues simply regarded Fivepenny as a venue to hone their reflexes and ball skills, in preparation for the more onerous confrontations to come later against the "real" contenders, like Lochs, Back, Athletic. However, all this fun was to come to a juddering halt last June, when the Blues, arriving here in the self-same round of this same Cup, were dumbfounded to find themselves shown the exit door, 1-2, thanks to second-half strikes by perennial pain-in-the-neck, Andrew "Bubble" Macleod, and Jack Dunlop.

A revenge trouncing, 6-0, three weeks later in a home League fixture seemed to the Blues to restore the natural pecking order. However, a fortnight later the Greens again astonished na Gormaich, at Cnoc a' Choilich, 2-1, in the EaF SF(1), before sinking with all hands 4-1, 5-3 on aggregate, in the second leg at Fivepenny. Yet in early September Ness were again to confound their opponents, 1-3, against a rather thin Carloway side, admittedly, in a merited League win, made memorable by a beautifully-taken "Bubble" opener after 5 minutes.

Already, this was the teams' third encounter of 2013, their two previous meetings both having resulted in 3-0 victories for the home side at Cnoc a' Choilich, in League and HAC R1. If Kevin Anderson and Graeme "Windy" Miller had an eye for recent history, they would remember on both occasions a Niseach machine composed of pacy, combative young bucks prepared to run - and run - and run; a solid back-line behind two extremely tricky and inventive midfield amateurs in "Bubble" and Russell-Smith; but a conspicuous absence of fire-power. The presence of Lee Johnson tonight no doubt warned the Blues that the Niseachs might have solved that particular problem.

With Donald "D.I." MacLennan injured, Andrew "Tago" Maciver continued at right wing-back, though Gus Maciver, who wished to be considered, was not risked, and placed on the bench beside Craig Hacker, Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald, Kevin "Barra" Macneil, and returning star, Kenny "Beag" MacLennan. Much-missed Billy Anderson, Carloway's own Frank McLintock, had been declared fit for action, and became central midfield partner of Domhnall Mackay, who had only flown back to Lewis earlier in the day, with Calum Tom Moody, Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod, and Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald. Fears of burn-out extended to five others: Dan Crossley, Fraser Macleod, Seumas Macleod, Scott Macaulay, and David Beaton, who had all started for the Select against Orkney in Dingwall last Saturday

Summer had finally arrived in Ness, and on a crystal-clear, windless evening the home side had the misfortune to kick off into bright sunlight - yes, sunlight! The opening play was familiar, and expected, as Ness gambled on striking hard, and early, knocking Carloway off-balance with two early surges, the second leading to an untidy clearance to the Blues' left after 5 minutes. The resultant corner led to a mishit-strewn scramble in the box, before being cleared long.

Eventually Carloway powered forward to establish an equilibrium in midfield and in their first cohesive move forward surprised themselves by hitting the target. On 14 minutes a Ness move broke down on the left outside the Carloway box and the ball was fed forward fast to a breaking "Gochan" racing into the Niseach half; he, in turn, wasted no time in dispatching the early straight pass inside Rush-Taylor for Fraser Macleod to zoom on to, carry almost to the bye-line, then square fast and low for the galloping Scott Macaulay to side-foot low to the keeper's left from 8 metres (**0-1**).

Two minutes later a long Moody throw-in on the right, 18 metres from the corner-flag, came out to Frazmac, 16 metres from goal leftish, and his instant right-foot power drive whizzed just outside "Sweeney's" left-hand junction of bar and post.

Features that had graced the Niseachs' display both times earlier at Cnoc a'Choilich soon emerged: frequent ascendancy in midfield; neat movement forward and use of the open spaces; and elusive forward surges. This led to a spate of fouls in dangerous positions around the Carloway box. A Rush-Taylor free-kick, 22 metres out on the left, led to chaos in the Blues' penalty area, before being blocked for a corner right; which, in turn resulted in a melée 12 metres out in front of Beaton, before being booted right once more, for "Bubble" immediately to send it back high across goal, but there were no takers.

A minute later "Gochan" escaped right and crossed for Frazmac to gather on the edge of the box, let the ball bounce high once, then thwack with his right foot just over the bar. On 27 minutes a Harris free-kick on the left, 22 metres from the bye-line, required a saving header from Mackay, before Crossley featured with a trademark mazy run down the left, along the touchline past three Greens, then turn inwards at speed but his parting right-footer from just outside the corner of the box downed a fulmar at the Butt.

On 38 minutes it was Macaulay's turn to race on to a glorious de Boer ball special from central midfield, bring down expertly in his stride, and burst into the left of the box, but the spinning ball unexpectedly raced away from him and his snatched shot lifted high and wide to the left. On the stroke of half-time it was Carloway's turn to earn a free-kick, dangerously close to the 18-metre line, slightly to the right. Anderson's flighted ball came in head-high, was blocked out to Mackay, 22 metres from goal in the centre but his immediate right-foot return cleared the bar by a couple of metres.

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

Na Gormaich had ended the half sagging a little, as if a combination of the depredations of the weekend, conjoined with a 45-minute collision with a pacy, combative group of young men, was seriously weakening their resolution. The questions now were: could a young, relatively inexperienced Ness team exploit this opportunity; and had the Blues any hidden reserves of energy to re-engage the enemy, and kill them off?

Immediately, they appeared to have solved their problem. A long ball forward from the left found Fraser Macleod facing his own goal in the Ness half of the centre circle. He rose to head-flick it straight backwards for "Gochan" to ghost forward at pace between Boyd and Rush-Taylor and whiz forwards into the right corner of the box. "Sweeney" rushed out and "Gochan" lifted a quick right-footer neatly over him - but unfortunately for the Blues, high over the bar too.

Carloway sank back perceptibly after this, surrendering possession and territory, as if relying on this season's new-found watertightness in defence, no doubt encouraged by the Niseachs' continuing inability to exploit Johnson and create clear-cut sightings of Beaton.

Suddenly the tactic paid off, when an incisive break, and deadly finishing, appeared to have killed the tie. On 59 minutes a Niseach surge down the left was blocked and "Pongo" burst forward, cutting in from the touchline to find Macaulay crossing the centre line in the middle. The *terquartista* floated the early ball over a retreating high back-line to find Fraz Mac speeding into the right-hand Ness box. He carried it forward like lightning, fighting off a desperate defender, and as "Sweeney" spread well 10 metres out from the near post, fired the ball low and hard through the luckless keeper's legs and home (**0-2**).

Two minutes later it nearly became much, much worse for the Greens, when Macleod lost his marker once more, this time down the left. Near the touchline he checked back, and sent in a high cross that the keeper and "Gochan" clashed for; the ball broke badly for the goalie but to the side and away from the striker, and before he could recover, on the penalty spot, to turn, gather, and shoot, the covering defender arrived to block.

An atmosphere descended on the ground that that was that, the Blues' part of it anyway, and Carloway appeared to re-adopt the approach of "*Job done*" and sank back into the previous mode of surrendering territory and possession; letting the opposition come at them; defending deep; breaking fast. The persistent, tired fouls proliferated, accompanied by some white heat directed at a patient referee. With 20 minutes left on the clock, a hotly disputed free-kick, 20 metres from goal at the left corner on the box, signalled, "*Game on!*", as Craig Harris bent an exquisite chest-high right-footer round the left of the line for Beaton to see late and block brilliantly at full-stretch low to his left. However, Johnson finally earned his pay packet by reacting instantly to spring forward and snap the rebound across the sprawled keeper and into the far corner (**1-2**).

Not part of the script! Na Gormaich had scarcely rallied when it was all-square, as Ness forced their way down the left. Ten metres from the line, a turn back and low cross escaped everyone as it flew across goal to reach Harris lurking just beyond the far post. The Niseach stepped in and back to his left, then curled a left-foot beauty round the despairing left hand of Beaton and inside the far post (**2-2**).

Suddenly, a stereotypical bone-jarrer had metamorphosed into a Cup thriller as the Niseachs grabbed the initiative from a tiring Carloway who found it difficult to alter their strategy. The Greens' efforts were rewarded when they seemed to have snatched an amazing victory: yet another Harris free-kick to the left came in from 22 metres and again Beaton saw it late as it whipped at him through a ruck. The ball broke out into a scramble as players swiped at the loose ball, before it reached Johnson, 12 metres out, to thwack low and hard into the centre of the net (**3-2**).

Needs must when the devil drives: Anderson/Miller took action, Kenny "Beag" joining "Dokus" in replacing an exhausted Anderson and "Sqweg" as the Blues somehow re-generated and end-to-end unarmed combat ensued. Unbelievably, a stroke of luck got the Blues out of jail: with five minutes to go, a break on the right saw a high cross come in from Fraz Mac in the corner, for "Dokus" to mistime his header slightly, ten metres out from "Sequoia", and the ball to carry wide of the diving keeper, strike the unlucky Boyd, and swirl high into the net (**3-3**).

In injury-time Carloway almost turned the game on its head yet again, when Macleod was sent clear on the left, to sweep on unmarked into the box, but "Sweeney" read him brilliantly to second-guess the striker's slip low to his right, 14 metres from goal.

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

Na Gormaich revamped their midfield once more with Kevin "Barra" Macneil replacing an extremely tired captain, Mackay seeming the lucky one: none of the other 21 exhausted young men on the field looked delighted at the prospect of another 30 minutes to battle; and it showed in an extra-time punctuated by mistakes, loose marking, and glaring misses.

On 94 minutes an incredible pin-ball scramble in the Niseach box witnessed "Gochan", then "Dokus", then Fraz Mac unable to convert a ball that the Niseachs seemed incapable of clearing and mishit back and forth round their box. Then on 99 minutes "Barra" had to make the saving header, on his own penalty spot, from a deep cross from the Ness left. A minute later, Johnson reacted well to fire over from the edge of the area, before a "Tago" run down the right fed "Dokus" on the right of the box. He turned and fired in a waist-high drive, but "Sweeney" was waiting for it.

The tenor of the game was now inexorably favouring the Blues and on 108 minutes this was confirmed, as the seemingly-tireless Macaulay fought his way down the left, checked to manhandle his way inwards, then supplied Kenny "Beag", 20 metres out to the left. He stepped inwards one pace, then sent a glorious right-foot shot low to the keeper's right, just inside the post (3-4). A peach right out of the textbook.

Two minutes later "Dokus" fired over the bar from 20 metres, set up by Macleod from the left, before, suddenly, two mad scrambles in the Carloway box signified the Ness boys last chances to force the hated penalty shoot-out. After 113 minutes a corner from the left saw the ball ricochet around the Blues' box, escaping tired leg after tired leg, before being booted as far as Sula Sgeir; only for an exact repetition of this fracas to occur three minutes later, this time eventually being carried clear by Moody to send an exquisite defence-splitter forward for an unmarked "Dokus" to run clear into the Niseach box on the left and place a careful low shot wide of the keeper and into the far corner (3-5).

### **After Extra-Time: Ness 3 Carloway 5**

Whether the customers got what they paid for or not cannot be answered but they certainly were royally entertained by an absorbing contest, full of standard Scottish Cup-tie features; two steadfastly committed sides; no quarter given; alternating fortunes; hotly contested decisions; a willingness by players to share their opinions freely with the referee and each other; plenty of pushing and shoving; and, in extra-time, the sight of a National Treasure in the home goal spending more time on his back suffering cramp than playing.

Carloway thought they had probably won this game by half-time; then were certain they had won it on the hour; were pretty sure they had lost it with 10 minutes to go; had rescued it; probably won it again; and finally, did win it again. No one in blue or green played badly; for na Gormaich, it was simply that the weekend's events cast a long shadow over the energy banks of most of their players and the midfield, usually a dominant powerhouse in the Carloway engine was not firing at full capacity, or at least not for long enough to establish certain victory.

Indeed, it was distinctly comatose by the hour; dangerous when you have class performers like Andrew "Bubble" Macleod and Micheil Russell-Smith around weaving their magic; and the quality of a marauding striker like Lee Johnson on display. Likewise, the persistent potent threat of the direct pace of Fraser Macleod, "Gochan", and Dan Crossley only flared intermittently, and pressure on the Ness back-line was only sporadic after the first thirty minutes, until the late injection of new blood from "Dokus", Kenny "Beag", and "Barra". After the Harris EaF game, a week's rest will hopefully recharge the batteries before two awesome, perhaps Season-defining

League encounters the following week, away to Point and at home to Athletic.

**Ness Man of the Match: Lee Johnson.**

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