

Lewis and Harris League:

Ness 2 (2) Carloway 7 (4)

Neil Mackay 7

Fraser Macleod 8, 19, 45:26 secs., 56

Micheil Russell-Smith 36 Dan Crossley 26, 43

Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald 46:20 secs

At Fivepenny.

Monday, 12.7.13.

Ref.: Kenny Macleod.

David Beaton

Domhnall Mackay(capt.) Calum Tom Moody Donald "D.I." MacIennan

Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Billy Anderson Murdo "Sqweg"

Macleod Dan Crossley

Scott Macaulay Fraser Macleod

Subs.: Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur (Scott Macaulay) 45; Phil Macleod (Dan Crossley) 74;
Eachainn Miller (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 82.

Sub. not used: Ben Smith.

Yellow card: Kevin "Gochan" Macleod 90.

For a decade or more, meetings with Ness were considered to be straightforward affairs, in which, so long as the Blues didn't try anything stupid, they were assured of victory. Nothing lasts forever, of course, and this particular tradition ended suddenly last June when the Niseachs surprised na Gormaich by defeating them here 2-1 in a JS Semi-Final. Even worse, the following month they had the nerve to repeat this score-line at Cnoc a' Choilich in Leg 1 of the EaF Semis, before Carloway contrived two weeks later, to rein them in, 4-1, in the return at Fivepenny, 5-3 on aggregate.

Even this season, in mid-June, Carloway were once again staring into the abyss at this ground, when, convinced they had secured their place in the JS Final on the hour, they immediately died without trace (most likely as a consequence of an "exciting" previous weekend in Perth having drained the tanks), then stood by helplessly as Andrew "Bubble" Macleod and Micheil Russell-Smith inspired a Ness side to overtake their 2-goal cushion, with three late goals in 10 minutes. Only a fortunate own goal off a luckless Stephen Boyd carried the Blues into extra-time, where two further strikes from Kenny "Beag" MacIennan and Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald averted the nightmare of yet another penalty shoot-out.

So, tonight on a mist-enshrouded Fivepenny Machair, the parting shot, no doubt, from Kevin Anderson as they left the dressing-room was, "Respect!", especially since star gatekeeper, Gus Maciver, Carloway's own Carsten Rumelow, was suspended (after advising "Chancey" of his thoughts on his refereeing at Garrabost), while Lewis's finest midfield enforcer, Seumas Macleod, was off the island. With the pool thin, this meant na Gormaich's own Makelele, Domhnall Mackay, had to take a step back, removing that extra bit of power from midfield and support for "Sqweg"; artistry and creativity was entrusted to carry the flag, in the shapes of Billy Anderson and "Dokus", alongside Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod and between Kevin "Gochan" Macleod and Dan Crossley.

The hope was that this would neuter and then outwit its exponents in the Ness midfield, "Bubble" and Russell-Smith. Thankfully, another frequent thorn in the Carloway boys' flesh, Lee Johnson, started on the bench, though the ageless Murdo "Mojo" Maclean was no mean replacement. One of his opposite numbers, Scott Macaulay, another crucial member of the Carloway squad and, rightly, L. & H. F.A. Player of the Month for June, did start, despite a continuing leg/knee problem.

The first concern tonight was whether or not the fixture would be fulfilled: only a light wind blew (honestly!) and the mist was to thicken and thin throughout the 90 minutes, making it difficult for David Beaton and Ross Morrison to judge ball movement. Immediately Anderson broke left to the centre line, and sent a perfect straight splitter Charlie Gallagher would have been proud of for Fraser Macleod to ghost left off the line, check at 18 metres, then send a delightful right-footer round Morrison but a metre beyond the far bar/post.

A sudden thrust down the left by the hosts ended with "Titch" Morrison curling a ball from 20 metres to Beaton's left but the keeper read it safely. A minute later another Ness move didn't end so well for the Blues when the Niseachs once more surged down the left. The ball was played back from the corner flag to be crossed in from the left touch-line, 20 metres from the bye-line. A back-header from the nearside edge of the box was whizzing past Beaton's left-hand post, before Neil "Kai" Mackay reacted like lightning to tip it home with his right foot from the 6-metre line (**1-0**).

The Ness team had barely congratulated each other before the sides were level as a de Boer peach from Crossley on the left centre line soared over the retreating back-line for Fraser Macleod and "Gochan" breaking right and left respectively into the Niseach box. "Fraz Mac" allowed Morrison to commit himself then stroked the ball neatly home to his left (**1-1**).

Until now, a worrying aspect of the Carloway game, reminiscent of the game-plan versus Westside last Friday, was a tendency to defend in numbers every time the ball was lost, thus surrendering possession and territory to the Niseachs up to midway within the Blues' own half. Coupled with this, was the innate desire of Mackay and Moody to get forward in support of the midfield at every opportunity, and this in turn frequently laid a heavy responsibility on D.I. MacLennan to be error-free.

However, confidence now oozed through na Gormaich as Anderson and Crossley began to open Ness's defence at will. In 13 minutes David Beaton had to recover quickly as a vicious low drive from the left edge of the box slipped from his grasp, before "Dokus" brought out a brilliant left-hand stop from Morrison as he ran from his own half through the centre and tested him from 18 metres. However, five minutes later it was "D.I.'s" turn to surge in from the right and play the ball forward from just outside the box, for Anderson(?) to back-flick it from 8 metres across goal and Fraz Mac to nip forward, take two steps to Morrison's right, and slot home (**1-2**).

Seven minutes later and the game was fast spiralling out of Ness's reach: a cleared corner came out to Moody inside the right touch-line, 10 metres from the bye-line, and he sent a ferocious low cross square across goal. "Fraz Mac" back-flicked at the near post, and the ball came out centrally to Crossley on the edge of the box, and he instantly thundered a right-foot missile into the top-left corner (1-3).

Ness wobbled: on 27 minutes a "Dokus" defence-splitting left-diagonal found Macleod charging into the box left, check, then pull a right-foot drive on to Morrison's right-hand post, and past. Then suddenly the Niseachs threatened to spoil the party. A corner on the left from Russell-Smith was returned to him as he moved in to the right edge of the box. He took two steps along the line, then power-drove a low cannon-ball goalwards. Beaton had it covered, but then it struck a Carloway right heel, and passed to his right at the speed of light (2-3).

A minute later "Bubble" coursed through off the right edge of the Blues' line, but 20 metres from goal he pulled his final daisycutter across and beyond Beaton's right-hand post. The half was to conclude with what must be one of the most astounding - and weirdest - goals ever scored by any player on the island, surpassing Ali "Tolsta"s" 40th minute cracker from 24 metres last season, in the Moldova Lewis versus Lochs; on a par with Domhnall Sheocaidh's amazing up-and-under against the Blues in August 2009.

On 43 minutes Crossley set off on a trademark run down the left touchline, out of the Blues' half. Ten metres into the Niseach half, he veered inwards and ignoring Macaulay and Macleod breaking free, left and right, he power-drove a right foot rocket straight forward towards Morrison from 24 metres. The ball flew forward, then rose into the air as the keeper looked upwards at the ball soaring high, then falling towards him; but as the ball dropped, it unexpectedly veered at the last moment, high to the keeper's left and twisted into the net at the corner of bar and post. The ball was already banging back and forth in the net before Ross had even time to think what had happened. Where were POD and Cathy Crossley when you needed them? (2-4).

Half-Time: Ness 2 Carloway 4

The occasional Blues' vulnerability at the back and on the wing meant Ness were still within touching distance at the break. However, whatever Chris Macdonald might have advised his men at half-time was swiftly rendered futile, as Carloway, despite "Tiger" replacing Macaulay from the start, scored twice in the opening 1 minute and 20 seconds of the second half! From the kick-off, Anderson, just inside his own half, played the ball through the centre to "Sqweg", breaking forward to send a straight splitter through the line for Fraz Mac to carry the ball unmarked into the right of the box and power-drive a rising shot across the keeper and inside the far post (2-5).

Immediately from the re-start, Ness lost the ball and, again, it was swept forward, this time by "Fraz Mac", to "Dokus" racing clear into the left of the Niseach box, and as Morrison raced to meet him, he placed the ball neatly,

low to his left and just inside the far post (2-6).

A stunned Ness side were now in danger of disintegrating. On 56 minutes Crossley once more raced down the left touchline, lost the ball by the corner flag, won it back, then travelled in along the bye-line. From 16 metres he cut it back across goal, where "Dokus", by the near post, back-flicked it to Fraz Mac, free by the far post and 12 metres out, and he thwacked it home inside Morrison's left-hand post (2-7).

On the hour Macleod won a tussle with Innes Macsween in the centre circle and burst forward to the edge of the box. As the keeper came to meet him, he tried to chip home over his left but Morrison somehow got his left hand to it and pushed it wide. On 71 minutes a Lee Johnson free-kick from the edge of the box forced Beaton to save low on the line, before Phil Macleod met an Anderson corner on the right, 12 metres out, to head down hard inside Ness's left-hand post. An instinctive swing from Ali Morrison's boot diverted the ball across goal, to go over Ross Morrison's head and home, when suddenly the goalie instinctively grasped it as it passed over his head on the line. The Blues' claims it was over were denied. Who needs Hawkeye when you've got Kenny "Flip"?

Carloway now clearly settled for what they had, dropping back and inviting Ness to press forward, then occasionally storming forward to attempt to add to their tally. The clock ran down uneventfully. In the 89th minute a Ness break down their right ended with Calum "Dola" Morrison being played into the right of the Blues' box to lift the ball over Beaton, then see his lob/shot touch the top of the bar and land on the roof of the net. Deep in added-on time, another Anderson corner on the right was met this time by the head of "Gochan", 12 metres out in the centre, only to be blocked on the line by the left-side of a defender and hooked clear.

Full-Time: Ness 2 Carloway 7

An unusual victory, to say the least. In the first half, na Gormaich found it remarkably easy to open up the opposition's defence; the trouble was, so did the Niseachs. The absence of Gus Maciver removed a certain solidity at the centre of defence, and at times Andrew "Bubble" Macleod and Micheil Russell-Smith threatened, with their imaginative final balls. However, Neil "Kai" Mackay and Murdo "Mojo" Maclean were too often isolated and left searching for the golden ball, to be consistently dangerous. This compelled "Mojo", in best Murray Maclean-style, to drop back, to find and hold, and attempt to play wide to breaks on the wing, thus further isolating "Kai".

The necessity to drop back to defend, in turn, meant Domhnall Mackay's powerful drive was lost to the midfield, though "Sqweg" strove hard to compensate throughout, and was assisted by Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur in the second and "Dokus" slightly forward, mostly on his right. The failure of the Ness defence to come out for the opening ten minutes of the second half made things considerably easier for the Blues. Fortunately, the Blues had two outstanding creative talents in midfield in Bily Anderson and Dan Crossley,

who were at their most creative tonight and repeatedly released the troublesome Macaulay on the left (in the first half), the pace of "Gochan" throughout on the right, and an indomitable strike force in the centre in Fraser Macleod.

Ness Man of the Match: Michael Russell-Smith.

Carloway Man of the Match: Dan Crossley.