

Lewis and Harris League:

## Carloway 1 (1) Lochs 1 (0)

Fraser Macleod 13

David Macmillan 90+2

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Wednesday, 28.8.13.

Ref.: Calum "Chancey" Macleod.

Ross "Tiny" Maclean

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

Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Dan Crossley Kevin "Barra" Macneil

Jack Buchanan Fraser Macleod

Subs.: Craig Hacker (Calum Tom Moody) 72; Ben Smith (Jack Buchanan) 86.

Subs. not used: Colin Maclean; Kevin Anderson.

Yellow cards: Donald "D.I." MacIennan 36.

The cold wind and dispiriting wetness might have explained the sparse crowd this evening but not the long faces on the diehards present, which were more indicative of times of old, when yet another humdrum season was petering out unsatisfactorily. Forgotten in the occasional icy hail seemed to be the euphoria at Barvas twelve days before, and the early season glory of first-ever ABC and Jock Stein Cups. Quite a collection, unrivalled in the Club's history, to add to 2012's Coop and Moldova Lewis triumphs!

However, what comes latest is always remembered best, and the Blues' miserable second-half showing two days before versus Athletic in the Moldova Lewis Semi-Final still clearly featured highly in the collective memory. Best to forget or if this was not possible, remember that, "*It's always darkest before the dawn*" and look on tonight and next Monday as further challenges to redeem themselves by forging a first-ever unbeaten League record.

The immediate obstacle took the shape of a resurgent Lochs outfit, once **THE** team to beat during their decade of island dominance, who, after a shaky opening to 2013, had now recovered to a healthy fourth place in the League, had been EaF finalists and were now 2013 Coop Cup holders, after last Saturday's shoot-out victory over Westside. Any team fielding the quality of David Macmillan, Peter Mackenzie, Donald "Nomie" Macdonald, Andy Murray, and Angie Campbell has to be feared. Indeed, it was surprising they were only fourth in the League!

This was the sides' sixth meeting of the Season, with honours shared so far, though na Gormaich led markedly in terms of bookings and dismissals, in the 450 eventful minutes so far. The fun had started in April in the ABC Round 2, when, despite the controversial red cards for Domhnall Mackay and Kevin "Gochan" Macleod in the first half, the Blues had somehow prevailed 4-1, thanks to a stunning first-half hat-trick from Fraser Macleod. An even more impressive Blues' performance two weeks later saw Carloway enforce their early Season dominance at Sgoil nan Loch with a convincing 5-1 League victory. However, it was Peter Mackenzie's turn to notch a hat-trick in mid-July in the EaF SF Leg 1 at Cnoc a' Choilich and despite forging a creditable 3-0 lead in the return at Creagan Dubh, na Gormaich had to settle for a 3-3 draw and elimination, 4-7. Lochs followed this at the end of the month in another stormy Semi-Final, this time 5-4 in the Coop, at Cnoc a' Choilich, with "Gochan" again seeing red, after the Leurpost men, guided by a "Nomie" masterclass, effectively outplayed the Blues for 80 minutes before being clawed back by two late "Dokus" strikes.

The good news tonight for the Blues was that "Gochan" returned from suspension; Dan Crossley had recovered, and Hammer of the Blues, Peter Mackenzie, was not risked from the start by Lochs, due to knee concerns. However, there was plenty of bad news: star *Torwächter*, David Beaton, had broken two fingers in his right hand on Monday, while Scott Macaulay's knee

problems continued and both Billy Anderson and Murdo "Sqwegg" Macleod had ankle injuries. Therefore, Kevin "Barra" Macneil, one of the few successes against Athletic, kept his place patrolling the left side, with Crossley moving into central midfield, many think his best position. "Dokus" dropped back inside "Gochan", and emerging ace, Jack Buchanan, made a welcome, overdue start. Another young-blood, 14-year-old Ross "Tiny" Maclean, appeared between the sticks.

The raging west sou'westerly continued from Monday and again Carloway had first-half advantage, but the pervasive gloom seemed to constrain both sides' customary explosive openings. On 6 minutes a Mackay slip forward found "Fraz Mac" on the left centre-line and he sent an immediate right-foot splitter straight on for Buchanan to break at speed into the left of the Lochs' box. His deep cross found "Gochan" coming in square on the right, but he hooked his ambitious volley back across goal and Farrell swung it away. Two minutes later another long ball forward was met by Macleod to head backwards and onwards in the centre just inside the opposition half and Buchanan took it in his stride expertly to whack a right-foot sizzler from 22 metres a metre over Houston's bar.

Carloway's bright spell continued with an astonishing opener: a Lochs' surge was broken up by Maciver on the front edge of the Blues' penalty area, and he moved it on early to Crossley running forward to the centre line, and he in turn transmitted it on 25 metres to "Fraz Mac" running nearside of Peter "Robbie" Mackenzie leftwards along the line of the Maroons' box. Unexpectedly Macleod whipped round and sent a left-foot Exocet crashing into the roof of Houston's right-hand net (1-0). What a cracker!

An energetic, wind-assisted Carloway were gaining a slight initiative, though Lochs caught them napping in 24 minutes with a sudden "Nomie" move down the right. A sharp cut-back was met on the near edge of the box by Chris Mackay but his drive was deflected high in the air where it moved direction alarmingly before Maclean managed to place himself correctly for its descent. Na Gormaich retaliated two minutes later when Crossley sent "Dokus" on the break through the centre but just on the edge of the area Mackay and Farrell combined to block and take the power out of his strike and it rolled harmlessly to Cameron Houston.

As a hotly-contested match unfolded, two quick Lochs' free-kicks caused anxiety in the Blues' box just after the half-hour. 20 metres out on the left an Andy Murray curler was missed by everyone as it spun across goal but "Nomie" caught it on the right bye-line to return it. However, the consequent melée led to multiple attempts being blocked and cleared. Two minutes later "Nomie" himself sent a free-kick in from the right, 24 metres from goal, but Angie Campbell's looping header from 16 metres was safely held by "Tiny".

It was now na Gormaich's turn to endure pressure. A Moody trip on "Nomie" right on the edge of the penalty area on the right bye-line, was sent across goal by the player impeded but Smith's diving header to meet it, 12 metres out, spun well-wide of the far post. A minute later and a "Fraz Mac" burst on to a Crossley golden splitter saw the goal-merchant outpace Mackenzie on the right but his squared feed to Buchanan, 14 metres from the line, was somehow cut out by Mackay. On 39 minutes it was "Gochan's" turn to break on to a Moody forward diagonal but midway within the Lochs' half his forward diagonal was too strong for Buchanan to capture in the wind. In stoppage time another piece of "Nomie" trickery on the right saw his low cross blocked out to Mackenzie but from all of 28 metres he sent his drive wide of Maclean's left.

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

Though Carloway seemed at their usual loss with what to do with the irrepressible creativity of the "Nomie" life-force (what team isn't?), they were helped by David Macmillan operating in

central defence, in place of Peter or Graeme Mackenzie, between Mackay and Mackenzie, and Angie Campbell lying deep, making it marginally easier to handle the dangerous Johnnie Smith. However, the decision to flood midfield meant that "Gochan", Crossley, and "Barra" infrequently advanced, ensuring that over-reliance was placed on the pace of Fraser Macleod to outrun Mackenzie and Mackay, and isolated young debutant, Jack Buchanan, who rarely had opportunities to impress against the experienced Macmillan.

On 53 minutes a 30-metre free-kick led to a scramble in the Lochs' box, before the ball was cleared out into the centre where Murray released Smith and Campbell(?), 2-on-1, on MacIannan, racing into the Carloway box, but Smith's squared supply from the right, 12 metres from goal, to his unmarked fellow-attacker on his left was, amazingly, whipped away by the right foot of "D.I.", sliding in on his back between them. Two Carloway opportunities followed: first, "Gochan" was sent clear down the right, but from midway within the Leurbost half, his cross forward was headed strongly past the near post by Buchanan from 14 metres. Then a "Dokus" free-kick from the same spot was met by Macleod, 12 metres out in the centre, but it cleared the bar by a metre.

On 62 minutes, as Carloway moved out of defence on the left, a long diagonal by Crossley, midway within the Maroons' half, crept low behind the retreating line for "Gochan" to come in right, but the pace of the ball meant his connection from 12 metres spun straight at Houston. Three minutes later, and the pass of the night saw Crossley out-Beckham Beckham with a glorious 40-metre cross diagonal from midway within the Blues' half on the right to "Fraz Mac" running clear on the left, and he raced unmarked into the left of the Lochs' box. Nevertheless, Houston reacted like lightning to pull off a miraculous block from 20 metres. The corner from Houston's right saw Mackay meet the ball directly in front of goal, 12 metres out, but his reverse-header zipped past the near-side post. A minute later and "Fraz Mac" was clear again on the left, but his squared ball to Buchanan, 16 metres from goal, was blocked by Mackenzie for yet another corner. On 69 minutes a "Dokus" free-kick, 20 metres out on the right, was flicked on in the centre by Moody, 16 metres out in the centre, but Houston was perfectly-placed to gather. A minute later and a hotly-disputed free-kick, 30 metres from the Carloway goal, was fired in low by Campbell but Maclean gathered the nastily-dipping ball at the second attempt.

The immediate arrival of Hacker for Moody signalled na Gormaich's inexorable retreat into trademark defensive mode, content to cede possession and territory and aspire to release "Fraz Mac", "Gochan", and "Dokus" on the fast break. Macmillan responded by moving forward as Lochs sensed increasing opportunity and in 78 minutes latched on to a 30-metre link to connect, 22 metres from goal, but again Maclean smothered at the second attempt.

With five minutes left, a Hacker long ball down the right freed Macleod to run into the right of the box, but , under pressure from Mackenzie, he duffed his right-footer wide of the near post. Two more chances fell to Lochs in a frenetic final five minutes: first, a corner on Maclean's right was met by massed attackers 10 metres out in the centre but glanced wide of the far post. In their next surge, this time on the right, Smith finally escaped from MacIannan, but his rapid drive from 14 metres flew across goal and wide.

Just as the Blues thought they had secured the three points, Maclean mishit the goal-kick straight to Campbell, and he immediately laid the ball off left for Macmillan to convert into an empty net from 20 metres (1-1).

**Full-Time: Carloway 1 Lochs 1**

Kevin Anderson and Graeme "Windy" Miller must have been gratified by the team's ebullient response to their second half nightmare on Monday, but their inability to convert some of the

many chances they created, especially in periods of dominance in both halves, was a concern, plus an early acceptance of the status quo, from which they hoped to launch repeated counter-attacks.

The mainspring of the Carloway success story this Season has been a granite defence, with award-winning performances, game-after-game, from Calum Tom Moody, Donald "D.I." MacIannan, and the generalissimo, Gus Maciver; but over-reliance on it is bound, at times, to result in the occasional bloody nose, most likely when faced with imaginative outfits like Lochs.

Though the Maroons had vastly fewer clear-cut opportunities than na Gormaich, they still had the better of the outfield for significant periods, and it's axiomatic that if you stick around long enough, plugging away, the golden chance must surely come if you have any quality at all - and Lochs are definitely not short of class with "Nomie", David Macmillan, Angie Campbell, and Johnnie Smith.

Other positives, however, for Carloway this evening were impressive displays from juniors, Jack Buchanan and Ross "Tiny" Maclean, an intimation of a glorious future, perhaps, and the continuing development of new-star-on-the-block, Kevin "Barra" Macneil, to augment in midfield the decisive presence of Domhnall Mackay and the game-changing creativity of Dan Crossley.

**Carloway Man of the Match: Dan Crossley.**

**Lochs Man of the Match: David Macmillan.**