

Co-op Cup Round 1:

Eriskay 1 (0) Carloway 3 (1)

Nico Revol 52

Domhnall Mackay 33

Ali "Laxay" Macdonald 75

Stuart "Gochan" Macleod 83

At Sgoil Lionacleit, Liniclate, Benbecula.

Saturday, 2.5.15.

Referee: Andrew "Reebs" MacIsaac.

Carloway line judge: Alasdair "Tiger" Macarthur.

CARLOWAY.

Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.

David "Lurch" Murray

Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Murdo "Squegg" Macleod Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Chris "Christy" Smith

Mark Macleod Kevin "Barra" Macneil Ali "Laxay" Macdonald Joe Armstrong

Gordon Craigie Stuart "Gochan" Macleod

Sub.used: Graeme "Windy" Miller (Kevin "Barra" Macneil) 68

Subs. not used: Andrew Macleod; Iain Stewart; Lewis "Oz" Miller; Ross "Tiny" Maclean.

Yellow cards: Graeme "Windy" Miller 78; Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur 87

Whilst media attention may have been focused on the general election, and the birth of the fourth in line to the throne, the priority for Carloway FC was a trip across the Sound of Harris for a meeting with Eriskay, at "neutral" venue Liniclate. In the two previous clashes between the sides, both in the Co-op Cup, it was honours even with one win apiece. In 2004, Eriskay won 5-4 on penalties after a 3-3 draw in Daliburgh. Then in 2013, "The Invinciblues" ran out 9-3 winners at the same venue as today's encounter. Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald was chief executioner that day as he helped himself to five goals.

Eriskay have endured a difficult start to the season so far, recording four straight defeats. Although they were unbeaten on Uist soil since a penalty shoot-out defeat to Lochdar Saints in 2012, trips to the Southern half of the Western Isles have yielded mixed results and should never be treated lightly irrespective of form. Manager Graeme "Windy" Miller's selection headache continued. From the eleven who started the previous match against Point, Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald, Calum Tom Moody, Kevin "Gochan" Macleod, Jack Buchanan and Kyle Brunton were unavailable, whilst Josh Harris' was out with a hamstring injury. Lee Johnson was also on "paternity leave" following the birth of his son. Furthermore, the pre-match appeal on social media for a pair of size 14 boots went unanswered, depriving the club of the services of Euan Macleod.

On the plus side, Murdo "Squegg" Macleod was fit to make his first appearance of

the season following injury. Mark Macleod and Kevin "Barra" Macneil were also available whilst Chris "Christy" Smith and Stuart "Gochan" Macleod were promoted from the bench. David "Lurch" Murray was handed his debut in goal. "Squegg" partnered skipper Domhnall Mackay at the heart of the defence with full backs "Tiger" and "Christy." Kevin "Barra" Macneil and Ali "Laxay" MacDonald made up the engine room and width and pace provided by Mark Macleod and Joe Armstrong. Gordon Craigie, the club's all time leading goal scorer was handed a rare opportunity to add to his tally as he spearheaded the attack with Stuart "Gochan" Macleod.

The bull pen of Andrew Macleod, Iain Stewart, Lewis "Oz" Miller and Ross "Tiny" Maclean was youthful and inexperienced, with a total of 5 club appearances between them (all by "Tiny") so the manager also listed himself in case of emergencies.

It was a dry and bright day, although there was a stiff breeze blowing diagonally across the pitch. Carloway kicked towards the "DI" in the first half. Despite their poor start to the season Eriskay appeared the more settled in the opening stages and they looked to catch Carloway cold. They were always looking to play in the diminutive young forward Dominic Macaulay, appropriately handed the No. 10 jersey. What he lacked in height was more than counteracted by his skill and endeavour. Reputation counted for little as he gave the Carloway defence no rest.

Eriskay created a couple of half-chances and "Lurch" had to beat away a snapshot from their Argentinean No. 9 Nico Revol. Carloway's tentative opening may have been understandable given the changes in personnel and position as well as the influence of the wind. The Blues were struggling to provide service to the front pairing, although Mark Macleod did have a good break down the right to the bye line and cut the ball back, but there were no takers.

After a scrappy and even half hour, with few clear cut chances, the game swung towards Carloway as they broke the deadlock in the 33rd minute. Murdo "Squegg" delivered a delightful free kick from wide on the Carloway right just inside the Eriskay half. Domhnall Mackay found space around eight yards from goal and rose unchallenged to head the ball into the net high to the keeper's right **(0-1)**.

Eriskay had an opportunity to equalise almost immediately, and "Lurch" came off his line smartly to block an opportunity from Eriskay's No. 5 as he was about to shoot. Kevin "Barra" Macneil also burst forward down the inside left channel, but as he reached the Eriskay box, he couldn't direct his shot on target with his weaker foot.

Half-Time: Eriskay 0 Carloway 1

At the break, the small band of Blues supporters was pleased that the team had managed to get their noses in front, although it was a slender lead and there was little to choose between the sides. The opening spell in the second half was always

going to be crucial and so it proved.

In the second 45, Carloway were now playing towards the wind turbine. Whether it was the motion of the turbine, or the words of their manager ringing in their ears, Eriskay came out strongly as they sought to restore parity. After a couple of early scares, they duly did so on 52 minutes, Nico Revol stroking home from close range, apparently with the aid of a deflection **(1-1)**.

It was all to play for now. For the next ten minutes, Eriskay looked the more likely side and David "Lurch" Murray spread himself well to block another close range effort from Eriskay's Revol.

Gradually Carloway reasserted themselves and became more of an attacking threat. Mark Macleod in particular was taking up good positions wide right and providing a threat down the Carloway right. With the game finely balanced, Carloway were forced to make a change in the 68th minute after Kevin "Barra" Macneil received a foot knock and couldn't continue. "Windy" decided there was nothing else for it but to introduce himself to the fray. This decision was soon vindicated as he shored up the midfield and added more bite to the side.

With 15 minutes left to play, Carloway regained the lead after a ball played in from the right reached Ali "Laxay" MacDonald around 12 yards from goal. His initial strike was blocked and he calmly tucked the ball into the net at the second attempt for his first goal for the club **(1-2)**.

The goal gave Carloway something to hold on to, and although they battled gamely Eriskay struggled to break down the increasingly effective defensive shield. The game was over as a contest in the 83rd minute. Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur received the ball deep in his own half and marauded forward to the edge of the Eriskay box. His effort at goal was charged down but eventually fell to Stuart "Gochan" Macleod, whose shot through a covering defender appeared to deceive the keeper and trundled into the net, much to his delight and to ensure Carloway's progression to the second round **(1-3)**.

Miller earned himself a caution after a strong challenge, before Eriskay had one last chance with a free kick just outside the box, which earned "Tiger" a yellow card. However, their profligacy with all previous dead ball opportunities presented to them was exemplified with an effort which sailed high and wide.

Full-Time: Eriskay 1 Carloway 3

Manager Graeme "Windy" Miller and his players will be delighted with the outcome of this match. Some observers may suggest that Eriskay may not provide the sternest of tests, however this was a keenly contested match which could have gone either way and required much industry and determination to achieve the desired result.

The confidence within the team improved as the game progressed, and the impregnability of the defence was key. Domhnall Mackay and Cameron “Tiger” were as reliable as ever. An initially overworked midfield gradually got the measure of their opponents and eventually broke down the Eriskay back line. Mark Macleod proved a thorn in the Eriskay flesh particularly in the second half, whilst Murdo “Squegg” Macleod possibly shaded it for Man of the Match with his presence and insightful passing throughout. An honourable mention must also go to “Windy” who led by example when he came on and clearly relished his outing at the ripe old age of 48.

The ongoing issue with player availability within the squad is hugely challenging, as it is with many other sides on the island. However, it does provide opportunities for the younger and fringe players to stake a claim for a place in the team, and it is heartening to see the likes of Mark Macleod, Stuart “Gochan” Macleod and Joe Armstrong augment the squad and justify selection.

Eriskay Man of the Match: Dominic Macaulay

Carloway Man of the Match: Murdo “Squegg” Macleod