

Eilean an Fhraoich Cup Round 1 Leg 1:  
**Carloway 0 (0) Back 0 (0)**

*At Cnoc a' Choilich, Carloway.*

*Monday, 08.06.15.*

*Referee: Neil Macritchie.*

*Carloway line judge: Gordon Maclennan.*

*Back Line Judge: Donald "Dano" Macdonald.*

**CARLOWAY.**

*Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.*

*Jack Maclennan (United)*

*Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur ■ Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Phil Macleod*

*Kevin "Barra" Macneill Eachainn Miller Billy Anderson Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod Ali  
"Laxay" Macdonald*

*Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald Ross Maciver*

*Subs. not used: Gordon Craigie; Chris "Christy" Smith; Euan "a' Ghuilc" Macleod; Hamish  
Macdonald (United); Gordon "Tago" Macdonald.*

*Yellow card: Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur 55.*

**BACK.**

*Manager: Donald "Bugsy" Smith.*

*Scott ? John S Macleod Stuart Macdonald*

*Nick "Nuck" Davis (Athletic) Chris Macleod (capt.) Chris Mackay (Lochs)*

*Scott "Flapjack" Macaulay (Athletic) ■ Campbell Macdonald (West Side) Craig Macleod  
Stephen Kettings (Point) ■*

*James Macleod (Lochs)*

*Subs. used: Domhnall Barden (Stephen Kettings) 45; Murray Macleod (Chris Mackay) 63.*

*Sub. not used: Michael Maciver.*

*Yellow cards: Stephen Kettings 27; Scott "Flapjack" Macaulay 75.*

Tonight was the first meeting of the Blues of East and West since their dismal League experience at Col Uarach in late April when a last-gasp Domhnall Mackay header had rescued an unlikely point for na Gormaich, after Shaun Macdonald had given the Bacachs a late lead. Of course, EaF rules precluded the appearances of Norman "Taz" Morrison, Lee Johnson, Josh Harris, and Stuart "Gochan" Macleod tonight, and even though there was also

no sign of Jack Buchanan, Mark Macleod, Andrew Macleod, or Joe Armstrong, a formidable line-up still featured.

The best young keeper on the islands, Jack MacIennan of United, made his annual appearance in goal, with Gordon Craigie dropping to the bench; fortunately Phil Macleod was available at left-back; and in the bull-pen, there was a welcome return for old favourite, Gordon "Tago" Macdonald; and Hamish Macdonald of United, alongside Chris "Christy" Smith and Euan "a'Ghuilc" Macleod. Regrettably, another regular guest, Gordon MacIennan (United), was out for the season through injury.

There were significant changes to the line-up, compared to the equivalent tie last June, which had included Donald "D.I." MacIennan, Stuart "Bubble" Macdonald (Athletic), and Calum "Dola" Morrison (Ness), with MacIennan replacing "Dokus" at half-time, when a Jason Macleod penalty in the 65th minute had given a resurgent Back hope, before two late counters from Gordon "Tago" and a Coinnneach Smith own goal delivered a 4-1 first leg victory. Back did pull back two goals in the return a week later, but yet again two late goals, this time from Buchanan and "Dokus", ensured progress for the Blues to a semi-final in which they demolished Ness (4-2; 7-4), before suffering eventual heartbreak, 1-2, to regular EaF winners, West Side, at Col Uarach.

Back were largely unrecognizable from the side Carloway met on 24th April this season, and had all the appearance of a Lewis and Harris Select. The guest-list was impressive: Athletic pair, Scott "Flapjack" Macaulay and Nic "Nuck" Davis, appeared, at left wing-back and central midfield respectively; James Macleod and Chris Mackay (Lochs) at goalkeeper and right midfield; Stephen Kettings (Point) at right back/half; and Campbell Macdonald of Westside in central defence. There was no sign of defensive bulwark, Ali "Tolsta" Maciver, though midfield *animateur*, Chris Macleod, was there to lead their campaign, and, unfortunately, perennial pain-in-the-tonsils, Murray Macleod, whom all at Cnoc a' Choilich thought safely retired, graced their bench.

The fact that this was no longer considered a "*Clash of the Titans*" (the sides lying 5th and 6th in an 8-club League, with three wins between them) was reflected in an initially meagre attendance, despite it being an attractive sunny evening though with the obligatory cold sou'westerly chilling the valley.

The patchwork quilt nature of the Bacach squad led to an initial uncertainty of roles in the Bacach ranks and granted an early initiative to a Carloway side, more familiar with each other's play. However, greater possession and territorial control did not lead to an increase in chances, which were to be few

and far between, at each end of Cnoc a' Choilich.

It was 12 minutes before the first "*moment*" materialised, when a "Laxay" surge on the left took him to midway within the Back half, on the left, from where he sent in an inviting cross but Maciver got under it, around the penalty spot, and Macleod had no trouble holding his looping attempt under his bar. Two minutes later a "Sqweg" free-kick from the left corner of the Bacach box was sent deep to the far post where two colliding Back defenders clumsily headed/bundled the ball off the line but across their goal, only for Anderson to meet it in the centre, 6 metres out, but the startled midfielder could only lunge instinctively at the ball, and somehow flicked it over the bar. It was to be the best chance of the entire game. Two minutes later an Anderson free-kick, midway within the opposition half, led to an assembled head-scramble in front of Macleod but was deflected onwards to the left.

Two iron back-lines continued to force the play high and into midfield, so that it was the half-hour before another "*real*" opportunity was created, when "Tiger" won a grinding tackle on the edge of his own box, and sped forward into the centre of the Back half, before finding Anderson diagonally, breaking down the right. He rode a tackle to reach 16 metres from the bye-line, before sending in a square low cross which beat the arriving "Tiger" and found Maciver by the far post. He leant back to struggle to control, and then whipped round to send in a nasty low shot to Macleod's right, but the young star dropped rapidly to his right to hold well on the line. Two minutes later a speculative right-footer from Chris Macleod, endlessly industrious as he tried, along with Mackay and "Nuck" to energize a faltering machine, cleared Craigie's bar by a couple of metres from 22 metres on the right.

In 39 minutes "Laxay" embarked on a trademark run down the left, stumbling through three tackles, before being blocked for a corner by "Flapjack", inside the left of the Bacach box. A perfect "Sqweg" corner led to a "Dokus" header, from 12 metres out in the centre, being saved brilliantly by Macleod, low to his left, the loose ball then being booted off the line and away by Chris Macleod. A minute later "Dokus" was once more inches away from opening the scoring when Anderson, winning the ball within his own half on the left, sent a high flighted de Boer forward for "Dokus" to speed on to on his left and just beat Macdonald and the charging goalkeeper on the edge of the box. However, his neat one-touch right-foot flick carried the ball onwards past the defence, but then trickled onwards a foot outside Macleod's left-hand post. A minute later Chris Macleod tried his luck once more when a headed clearance from Mackay was met by him 24 metres out in the centre but again his attempt cleared the bar, this time by 3-4 metres.

The half closed when Kettings supplied Maconald on the right, and he cut

square inwards along the line of the box past two defenders but sent his low left-foot drive a metre past Craigie's left-hand post.

### **Half-time: Carloway 0 Back 0.**

It had not been the most exciting of spectacles for those attending, with relative few goalmouth incidents and even fewer "*near-things*", though James Macleod had acquitted himself admirably when activated. Jack Maclellan could have remained in the dressing-room doing his homework. Neither forward-line had featured greatly or been allowed to; a flooded, well-matched midfield and two resilient defences mainly explained that.

The game had stalemate written all over it, even at this early stage. There was to be little change in the next half, which opened with initial Bacach pressure down their left, which led in turn to two quick Macaulay corners, the first being headed out once more; the second leading to an untidy scramble in the Carloway area, before being hefted away by "Tiger". In 50 minutes Macleod demonstrated that the trigger hairs had almost been calibrated in the interval by sending a right-foot daisy-cutter from the left just past Maclellan's right-hand post from 22 metres.

In 58 minutes a Chris Mackay free-kick, midway within the Carloway half in the centre, was played square to Macleod but he lifted his attempt a couple of metres over the Carloway bar. A minute later a no. 7 (Scott?) corner on the Blues' left was met on the centre spot by both Macdonald and John S Macleod, but Maclellan grasped the ball confidently, high to his right.

Finally, on the hour, na Gormaich appeared to get their second wind and "Laxay" once more embarked on a characteristic run down the left, tricking his way through four defenders and into the box, but unfortunately the last tackle saw the ball rebound off his shin 2-3 metres in front of him and Macleod was out like a shot to drop on the loose ball. In 67 minutes an Anderson run on the right and cross led to an amazing *melée* in the Back box, with Maciver, "Laxay", and "Dokus" all having shots blocked before the ball spun outwards and away, before being chipped back in by "Sgweg" to "Dokus", 16 metres out in front of goal. He instinctively headed it back inwards across Macleod, but the keeper, though slightly deceived by the passing ball, still managed to claw it away magnificently to his right.

As Carloway gradually ran out of ideas, Back suddenly began to force the pace in the final twenty minutes, creating a range of so-so chances. In 70 minutes a no. 7 (Scott?) free-kick on the right edge of the Carloway box was driven in hard and was met by the head of Macdonald in front of goal, 16 metres out, but the pace of the arriving ball made his header too difficult to

direct and his attempt whizzed metres wide of Maclennan's right-hand post. Two minutes later super-sub., Murray Macleod, tricked his way down the Back left to 16 metres from the bye-line before sending across a square low cross to his namesake on the edge of the box, but the midfielder didn't connect cleanly and his shot trundled straight to Maclennan.

Moments later, a misunderstanding between Mackay and Macleod just inside the Blues' half led to a Macdonald break towards the right of the Blues' box, before he slipped the ball inwards to his left, but Maclennan was alert and pulled off a first-rate save to his left with his fingertips from John S Macleod right-foot sweep from 18 metres.

In 81 minutes an almighty clearance forward from deep in the Bacach half was caught by the Carloway right corner flag by the chasing Domhnall Barden; he immediately supplied Murray Macleod, arriving in the near corner of the box, but his snap left-footer curled two metres wide of Maclennan's left-hand post.

The final opportunity arrived one minute into added-on time when Chris Macleod broke through the centre, then sent the perfect diagonal between "Tiger" and Mackay for Murray Macleod to break down the left, then send in a square cross for John S Macleod in the centre, but his hurried shot from 14 metres went straight up.

**Full-time: Carloway 0 (0) Back 0 (0)**

The game fell into what is rapidly becoming a pattern for na Gormaich: strong, committed individual performances, based around a rock-solid defensive trio, and a midfield which combines the industriousness and imagination of "Sqweg", Miller, and Anderson; the roving creativity of "Dokus"; and spread and pace from "Barra" and "Laxay". Unfortunately, Chris Macleod, "Nuck", and Mackay operated at this same level, and this was to create a crowded stalemate in the middle, while Macdonald and No. 7 (Scott?) proved more of a handful than expected for "Laxay" and "Barra", forcing them back to block/defend more than desired, and consequently allowing them only the occasional opportunity to drag the Bacach back-line wide and thin for Ross Maciver to exploit.

Also, the desire, or necessity, for "Dokus" to lie deep meant that when the killer ball did come forward, from Miller, Anderson, "Sqweg", or Mackay, more often than not "Dokus" was in a *trequartista* position and this left a lone, inexperienced striker to chase the pass among a sea of defenders, with limited success. Balls to feet were rare for him, therefore most Carloway chances came from range, apart from the early opportunity for Anderson. A

long, long Second Leg beckons next Monday.

**Carloway Man of the Match: Ali "Laxay" Macdonald.**

**Back Man of the Match: Chris Macleod.**