

Moldova Lewis Cup Round 1:

Point 6 (3) Carloway 1 (0)

Stuart Flower 18 Eachainn Miller 67

Duncan Hunter 30

Andrew "Mowgli" Macleod 41

Andrew Murray 68

Elliot Rudall 75

Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod 90 (o.g.)

At Garrabost.

Friday, 31.7.15.

Referee: David "Spider" Macleod.

CARLOWAY.

Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.

Gordon Craigie

*Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Ali "Laxay" Macdonald Chris "Christy" Smith
Kevin "Barra" Macneil Ross Maciver Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod (capt.) Eachainn Miller
Joe Armstrong*

Jack Buchanan Gordon "Tago" Macdonald

Subs. used: Josh Harris (Gordon "Tago" Macdonald) 71; Lee Johnson (Jack Buchanan) 80.

Subs. not used: David "Lurch" Murray; Stuart "Gochan" Macleod; Andrew Macleod.

POINT.

Manager: Angus Mackay.

Duncan Hunter Sam Macsween

Daniel Macleod Andrew "Mowgli" Macleod ■ Angus Macdonald Elliot Rudall

Iain Mackenzie ■ Stuart Flower (capt.) Scott Campbell Stephen Kettings

Alex Wright

Subs. used: No. 18 (Sam Macsween) 63; Andrew Murray (No. 12) 68; Sean "Bayble" Macleod (Daniel Macleod) 75; No. 15 (Stephen Kettings) 77.

Yellow cards: Andrew "Mowgli" Macleod; Iain Mackenzie (serious foul play).

Eager anticipation was unlikely to be the dominant emotion running through the minds of the Carloway squad (or, at least, those whom circumstances allowed to actually turn out in blue) as they undertook their second visit to Garrabost of 2015, and prepared for their FIFTH meeting in total against the Rubhachs. After opening day joy in the ABC Round 1 at Cnoc a' Choilich, courtesy of a penalty shoot-out following a scoreless draw, it's been misery all

the way - 2-3 in the League, 1-4 in the HAC Round 1, both in Carloway; then 0-4 in the League a fortnight ago. However, it was the manner of this last defeat which still rankled in the Carloway dressing-room because of a raft of controversial decisions which all seemed to punish na Gormaich.

There was initial encouraging news for the Blues, with the absence from the Rubhach line-up of main tormentor, Ali "Wally" Maciver (commencing a sports scholarship in the U.S.A.), defensive stalwart, Alistair Gillies, and attacking midfielder, Donald "Spike" Smith, but this hardly compensated for the absence of crucial performers from the Carloway outfit. Billy Anderson, Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald and Captain Courageous, Domhnall Mackay, were in attendance at a Breasclate wedding, while Norman "Taz" Morrison, a top performer on Monday versus Ness, was at his brother's wedding in Harris. Angus Grant, two-goal scorer against Barra last Saturday, was deemed unfit shortly before kick-off, while Josh Harris and Lee Johnson both sustained slight niggles in the pre-match warm-up and were only risked on the substitutes' bench, alongside David "Lurch" Murray, Stuart "Gochan" Macleod, and Andrew Macleod.

It may be hard to believe but there was some good news: ace striker, Jack Buchanan, who came on as a substitute against Ness for 26 minutes, after a lengthy absence, started up front beside Gordon "Tago" Macdonald. There was also a welcome return for Ross Maciver after illness and a freak injury, though he had to be used in an unusual attacking midfield role beside captain for the night, Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod; to his left, emerging star, Eachainn Miller, rapidly superseding Billy Anderson and "Sqweg" himself as prime *animateur* in the na Gormaich engine room, appeared, having recovered from the "heavy" treatment he received in Lionacleit, once the opposition had identified him as the main creative danger in blue.

The manager's main problem was the back-line: with no "Taz", nor Mackay to fall back for Morrison when unavailable, an untried defensive line-up was necessary. Ali "Laxay" Macdonald, who had performed creditably in a defensive position against "Wally" in the 0-4 match here, and versus Barra and Ness, adopted a more central role tonight, with Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur and Chris "Christy" Smith on either side, although who exactly was to deal with the pacy Sam Macsween was unclear, as Smith seemed more interested in tracking Duncan Hunter than Macsween. Joe Armstrong started on the left, as additional support.

After the deluge earlier in the day, a surprisingly beautiful evening greeted fans and players at Garrabost: windless, cloudless, and with a piercingly bright evening sun which shone directly into the Reds' eyes in the first half. Yes, climate change has obviously affected the weather in the east of Lewis!

It was "*Long Johns off weather*", for a change! Initial combat was inconclusive, but already impending danger was apparent from a thrusting Point midfield comprised of Elliott "Trevor Hockey" Rudall, Angus Macdonald, and Andrew "Mowgli" Macleod, the ex-Back man especially menacing with his forward runs and lay-offs to Macsween and Hunter.

A 5th minute free-kick opportunity was squandered before another excellent chance materialized in ten minutes right on the edge of the box centrally, after Hunter was felled by Smith. Macsween took it carefully over the wall but it was too slight and predictable and Craigie held safely, high to his left. Two minutes later interplay on the right between Kettings and Macdonald nutmegged Armstrong and permitted the full-back to make 20 metres from the line before squaring to the unmarked "Mowgli" in the centre but Macleod's first-time connect went straight to "Van Der Sar".

As the Blues struggled to establish a presence in midfield, the wheels eventually came off the bogie. Repeated fouls evinced a side struggling to cope. In 18 minutes yet another free-kick, this time midway within the Carlaway half, out on their left, came across the box high to the far bye-line where, 8 metres from goal, Macleod met it perfectly, first-time with his left foot, to reverse-cut back square for Flower, ghosting in right in front of goal, to flick home with his left foot (**1-0**).

The Blues' makeshift side did not crumple, but took the fight to the enemy. A plus was the willingness to run at the enemy by a fearless Miller and a willingness to get forward by "Barra", Maciver, and Armstrong, but "Tago" was still obliged to retreat to support and forage, leaving Buchanan to run and run, without reward.

Suddenly, it almost came right for na Gormaich when a drive down the right saw a "Barra" feed allow "Sqweg" and "Barra" to wall-pass Mackenzie and let "Sqweg" cut in from 20 metres on Wright's left. He tried to find Buchanan; the ball rebounded. Again he fed Buchanan to his left and he in turn found "Tago" on his left; his shot came back to him and he slipped it to Armstrong moving in on the left unmarked. The young star didn't quite connect cleanly, but his low left-foot daisy-cutter non-plussed Wright low to his left and trundled across goal to smack off the far post then be booted to Swordale.

Immediately Kettings broke on the right, then played another quick one-two with Macdonald which allowed him to race on behind Armstrong to 18 metres from the bye-line, before cutting in diagonally, but his low drive ended harmlessly in the near side-netting. A minute later a repelled Blues attack saw Flower clear forward to "Mowgli", who broke at speed before playing the perfect breaker forward between "Laxay" and "Christy" for Hunter to steam in,

and as Craigie hesitated, lob the stranded keeper perfectly from just outside the box for number 2 (**2-0**).

As Carloway began to lose shape, Point almost added a third in 37 minutes when an oddly-subdued Macsween, no doubt due to the presence of his constant shadow, "Tiger", was freed on the right by Rudall, then played in early and square to "Mowgli" on the edge of the box, but Macleod's neatly-flighted strike was tipped on to the top of the bar and over by an alert keeper.

It was only a stay-of-execution, however, as the contest ended in 41 minutes, when a faltering Blues' attack was blocked, "Tago" being forced to turn the ball back as far as "Laxay" midway within his own half, but Macsween read the pass, winning the ball off the defender inside the Carloway half, then racing unchallenged down the right, before drawing the solitary defender, "Christy", to pass square to a supporting "Mowgli", on his ownsome in the centre, and Macleod first-touched the ball instantly to the left of the approaching Craigie from 16 metres (**3-0**). Beautifully-taken by the first half's outstanding performer.

Half-time: Point 3 Carloway 0

Whether or not events were transpiring better or worse for the depleted Carloway squad was immaterial. "Windy" had zero options to manoeuvre, whereas Point sensed little danger and could simply play to the mantra, "*Steady as you go*".

As expected, the score-line militated against any fast-paced opening to the second half, and it was 55 minutes before the first chance of the new half appeared, a Hunter corner on Craigie's left being met in front of goal by Flower, 10 metres out, but it flew a metre wide of the far post. Two minutes later a Macdonald free-kick, midway within the Carloway half on the Point right sent an unmarked Hunter clear on the wing to 20 metres from the bye-line, before cutting the ball, square and low, to "Mowgli" in the centre, but Macleod's snap right-foot hook went well past Craigie's left-hand post.

In 65 minutes a "Tiger" block on "Wally", inside the Carloway box, to Craigie's right, fed "Laxay" moving forward in the centre. He in turn relayed the ball to "Barra" moving down the right across the centre line and the ball was quickly transferred inwards to Miller, who fought his way to the edge of the box, but his drive was blocked by Flower. However, two minutes later he was more successful, when another "Barra" run on the right ended with the ball being squared to him, midway within the Point half in the centre. As the Rubhach line retreated defensively, from 30 metres he unleashed a low unstoppable right-footer skidding deep into Wright's right-foot corner (**3-1**). What a strike!

Congratulations had scarcely been exchanged before the 3-goal deficit was restored. Kettings, midway within his own half, on the right touch-line, received from Wright and found "Mowgli" drifting through the centre. When he played diagonally right towards Murray moving into the left of Craigie's box, "Laxay" challenged. The ball bounced high off both of them, then backwards over the defender's head. Craigie rushed out, and as he, the ball, and Murray collided, again the ball ricocheted high, this time over the keeper's head and high into the net, inside his left-hand post (4-1).

The Blues could only reply with a 25-metre "Sgweg" free-kick in the centre in 73 minutes but his carefully-placed thump did not trouble Wright. More misery descended on Carloway in the 75th minute when a Macdonald corner on Craigie's left was nodded out by Smith, only as far as Rudall on the edge of the box, and he turned immediately to crash a left-footer high into the centre of the net (5-1).

As the game wound down, Carloway earned a few late half-chances. In 78 minutes a break down the right by "Barra" saw the ball played square inwards to Miller who in turn combined with "Sqweg" to find Harris running leftwards across the Rubhach box. The striker made an edge for himself, then reverse-cut a left-foot strike from 14 metres but Wright read it low to his left and pushed the drive away brilliantly with his left hand. In 86 minutes, a Macleod diagonal from midway within the Carloway half on Craigie's left, was bundled out by Smith, and "Laxay" booted the ball downfield. Miller controlled the ball neatly within the centre circle, before turning round to his left to send a perfect Jimmy McIlroy between Flower and Mackenzie for Maciver to race on to. However, a moment's hesitation by the young striker allowed an alert Wright to race to the edge of his box and boot clear. Two minutes from time, Johnson was sent clear down the right after "Sqweg" and "Barra" combined in the centre, but as he outpaced Mackenzie into the left of the Point box, Wright stormed out to block his low drive with his left foot.

Immediately, the Rubhachs broke, "Mowgli" finding Rudall in the centre, and he instantly shipped the ball onwards to Murray, clear on the right. Twelve metres from the line, he whipped across a low, square ball towards the far post, but "Sqweg" threw himself towards it to prevent the cross, and unfortunately toed it across Craigie and just inside his left-hand post (6-1). It perfectly summed up Carloway's night.

Full-time: Point 6 (3) Carloway 1 (0)

There was little evidence tonight to suggest the Rubhachs were inclined to save themselves for Monday's crucial League clash with Lochs, though, at

times, they were greatly assisted by an uncertain makeshift Blues' team, especially an exhausted back-line in the final twenty minutes. What doesn't work was learned tonight, rather than what does. Though the dogged commitment of the back-line was never in doubt, there was an uncertainty throughout, despite "Tiger" generally snuffing out the dangerous Macsween most of the time and "Laxay's" determination to compete and lead.

The main dangers came from an inspired "Mowgli", an aggressive, thrusting Rudall, and the pace of Kettings down the right. Miller, "Sqweg", and "Barra" fought hard to blunt the Rubhach midfield and right, with variable success, but, again, though they were individually effective, they didn't gell as a unit, and this in turn left the dangerous, pacy Buchanan like Napoleon on Elba, though he ran and ran in search of the ball. Ross Maciver, though willing and certainly able, looked misplaced and at times unsure of his role, and obviously needs more match practice to get him back up to speed, though Eachainn Miller and Joe Armstrong looked the part, though the latter, like Maciver, needs more game-play.

On an evening like this, later in the game, when na Gormaich were clearly not going anywhere, it would have been good to see "Gochan" and Andrew Macleod strut their stuff, though the final impression left on them might have been destructive, rather than instructive.

Point Man of the Match: Andrew "Mowgli" Macleod.

Carlway Man of the Match: Eachainn Miller.