

A.B.C. Cup Final:

Carloway 4 (2) Westside 3 (1) (after extra-time; 2-2 after 90 minutes).

Donald "D.I." MacIennan 27 Innes Iain Morrison 17
Archie "Statto" Macdonald 34, 93 Johnnie Wallace 72
Johnny Wallace o.g.101 Jamie Sullivan 98

At Goathill Park, Stornoway, 18:30.

Friday, 29.4.16.

Ref.: George Macaskill..

Near-side: Calum "Chancey" Macleod.

Far-side line judge: Andrew Macaulay.

Fourth official: Willie "Mashie" Macleod.

CARLOWAY: 4-4-1-1.

Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.

Asst. Managers: Kenny "Noley" MacIennan; "Gus" Maciver.

Gordon Craigie

Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur ■ Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Donald "D.I." MacIennan Ali
"Laxay" Macdonald

Jake Allan Kevin "Barra" Macneil Eachainn Miller Archie "Statto" MacDonald
Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald
Dan Crossley ■

Subs. used: Ross Maciver (Jake Allan) 87; Murdo "Sqweg" Macleod (Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald) 95.

Subs. not used: Ross "Tiny" Maclean; Chris "Christy" Smith; Josh Harris.

Yellow card: Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur 97.

Red cards: Dan Crossley 103; Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur 110.

WESTSIDE: 4-5-1.

Manager: Murchadh Macdonald.

Asst. Manager: Alex "Nibble" Matheson.

Luke Mackay

Martainn Shields Colin George Morrison Innes Iain Morrison ■ Scott Graham Ali
"Barvas" Macleod

Duncan Maclean (capt.) ■ Johnnie Wallace Donnie "Noe" Smith Gordon Campbell
Iain Gillies

Subs. used: Jamie Sullivan (Colin George Morrison) 59; Alex John Morrison (Martainn Shields) 105; Euan ? (Luke Mackay) 114.

Subs. not used: Warren Mackay; Ruairaidh Graham.

Yellow cards: Duncan Maclean 74; Innes Iain Morrison 74.

Red card: Duncan Maclean 116.

Tonight it was a first visit of 2016 to Lewis's own Hampden Park for the deadly rivals from the west, fresh from their League confrontation the previous Monday at Barvas, Personal contact with the deity would have been necessary to predict what level of play, or what result, could be expected tonight after a League game in which Carloway had edged the first half but West had run the second and, overall, had more "good" chances than their rivals. However, the northerly wind had been the dominant influence on proceedings, yet victory on the night would surely have granted the Siarachs an important psychological advantage this evening; "*bragging rights*", is the

current phrase, yes? Also, the history of cup final meetings between the sides favoured West: Although na Gormaich triumphed 3-0 in the Jock Stein Cup versus West in 2013 and won the Moldova Lewis on penalties the year before, their opponents eclipse them in head-to-head cup final victories: 3-1 in the 2010 Coop Cup, 2-0 in the same cup on 2014, 2-1 both times in the EaF, 2012 and 2014, and the 2014 ABC, 5-0. Also, in cups won altogether: the 2010 and 2014 Coop, the 2011 and 2014 ABC, and the EaF in 2008 and from 2012 to 2014, the Siarachs' record clearly outshines Carloway's solitary successes in each of the local Cups. History, of course, little affects what may happen over 90 minutes (or 120 or penalties) between 22+ young men who are so familiar with each other's style of play, as individuals or a team, that they know it as well as their own team-mates' or club's. So, this evening, one slick expression of talent, or moment of good - or bad - luck, the weather even, or condition of the pitch might have decided which boardroom the silverware graced.

The starting line-ups were practically identical from the 25th, the only change being Jake Allan starting on the right for Carloway and star-in-the-making Ross Maciver beginning on the bench, although from the off, the Blues had decided to shoot the pace of Dan Crossley into "Noe's" face, with "Dokus" dropping to *trequartista*. The mark of genius - in footballing terms, anyway - is to read the opposition's weaknesses, then exploit them. Westside, therefore, appeared to designate Scott Graham as a Makélélé figure, with Colin George pushing left and Innes Iain more a *mediocentro*, or false 9, not really a *trequartista*,

The temperature remained Arctic and a light northerly was always apparent, but the pitch looked playable and a healthy crowd, thankfully, turned up, unaware that quite a spectacle was about to unfold. Murchadh's smart game-play almost bore fruits immediately, as Westside seized the initiative, and Carloway faced major problems from the off. As on Monday, Shields and "Barvas" lay wide, stretching the Blues' back-line, while Innes Iain reincarnated Hidegkuti. Mackay glued himself to his name-sake while "D.I." remained as Baresi, with a heavy touch of Jim Holton thrown in. This gave Innes Iain space in the centre to create, and, more importantly, time, to orchestrate forward movement, as "Barra" was occupied, repeatedly tracking back to deal with Colin George coming forward on the left. Mackay was drawn to cover, which in turn left space for the other Mackay to surge on to anything from Innes Iain, who only had Miller, not Miller and Crossley, to deal with tonight.

In the 8th minute the first chance materialized, Mackay racing on to an Innes Iain stab forward that deceived Domhnall Mackay and ran behind "D.I." Mackay raced forward but slightly overran the ball, allowing "Van Der Sar" to charge out and smother the ball, just inside his area. The Blues' midfield chased shadows as West kept up a La Liga-inspired pressure. Innes Iain's trickery on the left of the Blues' area, to Craigie's right, saw him create space but his miscued right-footer whizzed square across goal for a throw-in on the far side.

In 12 minutes a square pass by Innes Iain to his right, was intercepted by Miller, who steamed forward out of the centre circle. Allan and Crossley shot forward, right and left. but the young star elected to shoot from 25 metres and, unfortunately, sliced his crashing right-footer high towards Engebret's. Moments later, "Barra" moved down the right, then found "Dokus" square inside him, but his hopeful 30-metre left-footer was headed away by Wallace for a corner.

Ironically, just as Carloway showed signs of a presence in midfield, Westside struck. As West broke, a "Tiger" tackle on Innes Iain resulted in a short Maclean free-kick to his right where Innes Iain, coming forward, thwacked an instant right-footer from 30 metres shoulder-high inside Craigie's left-hand post. Andy Penman could not have hit it better! **(0-1)**.

Battle was truly joined now. West still continued their shape-shifting *totaalvoetbal*, reminiscent of the style of Lochs in the 2000s, but na Gormaich ground their way, by industry, work-rate, and incisive (sometimes brutal) tackling, into a force in midfield. In 18 minutes Allan managed to get wide of Maclean on the Carloway right before squaring inwards, the ball eventually finding its way to to "Dokus", 20 metres from goal on the left. Typical "Dokus" trickery, *à la* Wiltord, repeatedly turning and turning back on himself, gave him space to face left, then place a delightful opener on Crossley, on the touch-line. "Raymondo" flew past Campbell but his sharp early cross 12 metres from the bye-line found no one as it flashed past the far post.

In 25 minutes Carloway's best move so far saw "Tiger" beat Shields to the ball on the right, midway within his own half, move forward, then find "Barra", who instantly moved it on to "Dokus", and his high winging cross, 18 metres from the line on the right, had to be headed away for a corner by Smith. Two minutes later Carloway were level. Forceful play by Allan on the right led to a perfect "Dokus" corner high across the face of goal. A whole host of players competed hard in the centre, 12 metres out, for the inviting ball, but "D.I." won the contest to ram a header high into the net **(1-1)**.

The Siarachs almost replied in minutes, as Innes Iain broke into the Blues' half to West's right, then played a sublime Xavi across to the left and inside "Tiger", for Shields to ghost behind the line and into the box. Again Craigie was alive to the danger and rushed to block the winger's attempted flick over his diving body to his left.

In 34 minutes the turnaround was complete, thanks to a defensive misunderstanding. A short "Dokus" corner on Carloway's right was mishit by Allan across towards Gillies. Graham left it to his approaching keeper, 6 metres out from his goal, but Gillies misread the situation and did not pick it up. The ball rolled on, right to the feet of "Statto", already half-turning away. However, the Uibhisteach was not that surprised that he failed to stab the ball past Wallace on the goal-line from 8 metres **(2-1)**. Weird, to say the least.

Once more Westside almost scored instantly in reply. Graham won the ball on the right from the halfway line and sent in a high, searching ball to the far post

which travelled out to the left, where Shields and Maclean played a neat one-two, before Shields lofted the ball square. Innes Iain met it with a backward spiralling header which Craigie knocked clear, heavily challenged by Mackay, on the right of his 6-metre line. Morrison fired the ball across goal where "Barvas" connected hard, on the central edge of the box, but "Laxay" was in exactly the right place on the line to block the ball away. However, Innes Iain, 18 metres out on the left, thumped the rebound instantly but it spun rightwards, away past Carloway's left-hand post. On the whistle, a Shields corner from the Siarachs' left was reverse-headed by Graham at the far post, 12 metres out. "Barvas" got his head to the spinning ball, directly in front of goal, but, under heavy pressure, could only head it straight up.

Half-time: Carloway 2 Westside 1

It would have been fascinating to be a fly on the wall in either dressing-room. After such a torrid opening, Carloway must have been basking in a comforting euphoria to be in such a fortuitous position, while the Siarachs must have been mystified, as they stared into their Bovril, wondering how on earth they managed to be behind. They had bamboozled Carloway in the opening quarter-hour, yet without creating a clear-cut opportunity, and it had taken Innes Iain's cracker to emphasize their superiority at that stage. However, they had been unable to capitalize on that advantage as the Blues clawed their way back into the match, pushing their back-line to support an overpowered midfield, and, in turn, feed the tireless Crossley.

Within two minutes, however, West could have been level, but for Craigie pulling off an incredible double save. MacDonald lost control of the ball; 22 metres out, on the Carloway left and "Barvas" played the diagonal in low. In a scramble on the edge of the box, Mackay rode a fierce tackle to shoot, but Craigie managed to block outwards with his left leg, on 10 metres. The young star contrived a spectacular overhead to return it, where it broke behind Mackay for Campbell, following up, to stab it back, hard, but Craigie reacted magnificently to get a reflex left arm out to knock it away.

In 53 minutes a Wallace clearance was headed on in the centre circle, then again, midway within the Carloway half, over "Tiger's" head. Shields was on top of it in a flash, reached the edge of the box in the centre, and as Craigie came to meet him, lifted the lob ever so neatly over the keeper's head - but, unfortunately, over the bar too. In 63 minutes Innes Iain fed the ball forward to a retreating Mackay, and he delivered the finest of Jimmy McIlroys behind "Laxay" for "Barvas" to make 18 metres from the line. His deep cross cleared the centre to reach the unmarked Shields, 10 metres out by the far post, but he pulled his header a foot outside "Van Der Sar's" right-hand post.

Within the next five minutes, na Gormaich had two good chances to "kill" the game. A searching de Boer from Mackay, in the centre, midway within his own half, cleared Campbell for "Statto" to run on to on the left. He made the line but his high cross was too deep. Allan chased and controlled the ball, on the right, then returned it but "Dokus", 12 metres out in the centre, headed a metre over. In 68 minutes a blistering trademark run by Crossley down the

right, saw his lightning low cross met by "Dokus", 16 metres from goal to the right. His immediate low connect was shot goalwards but a falling Campbell miraculously blocked the ball out and away. An amazing stop!

Na Gormaich soon regretted this bad luck, as four minutes later a Maclean corner on the West right, was headed home by Wallace, in a carbon copy of "D.I.'s" opener for the Blues **(2-2)**.

By this point, the atmosphere within Goathill was febrile, to say the least, even toxic, the action frenetic, and increasingly conducted by the long ball, at 100 m.p.h., but the defences held, by fair means or foul - usually the latter. The final real chance arrived in the third minute of added-on time when another Maclean free-kick from just inside the Carloway half, on their right, broke out to Shields, 16 metres from goal in the centre, but his quick-fire right-footer flew a metre outside Craigie's left-hand post.

Full-time: Carloway 2 (2) Westside 2 (1)

Another thirty minutes on the strength-sapping Goathill pitch was a big ask for the players, but clearly the adrenalin banks were not yet exhausted and the 100 m.p.h. action recommenced. Immediately, the Blues were ahead. A Westside attack down their left was broken up by "Tiger" who played forward to "Barra" who contrived to play it back to "D.I.", on the halfway line and he thundered a high cross-field Touré to MacDonald ghosting off Campbell on the far side and into the box. The swirling rocket was difficult to read but, without jumping, the wing-man head-glanced the ball slightly forward, just enough to take it well outside Gillies's reach and inside his right-hand post **(3-2)**.

Three minutes later it was almost all over when a "Tiger" tackle led to a glorious Miller Charlie Gallagher which sent Crossley past "Noe" like Carl Lewis down the West left and into the right of the box, and as Wallace and Gillies closed on him, he fired a ballistic right-footer across goal, but just beyond the far post by a couple of feet.

A few minutes later, Minerva's scales swung once more towards the Siarachs as a Maclean free-kick, on the right touch-line was met by Mackay, 16 metres out, and headed on rightwards to an unguarded Sullivan, and from 16 metres the young ace sent the sweetest of low right-foot strikes across a helpless Craigie and inside his right-hand post **(3-3)**.

The crowd had hardly sat down in their pews before Carloway crept ahead again, by the cruellest of methods. A break on the right, set up by Maciver, supplied by "Sqweg", found a free "Barra" behind Maclean. His sharp square cross, 12 metres from the line, was intercepted by the head of a covering Wallace, 6 metres out from goal towards the Carloway player, but his attempted safety clearance for a corner ended up with him glancing the ball neatly inside an unsuspecting Gillies's left-hand post **(4-3)**. Fate is a cruel overlord. The player who had earned West an extra 30 minutes, now put Carloway ahead!

The Blues did not have long to gloat, however, being reduced to ten men, when ace *animateur* and pace merchant, Dan Crossley, flattened his counterpart, Luke Mackay, on the halfway line.

Extra-time: first period: Carloway 4 Westside 3

Any semblance of structured play disappeared in a red-hot final fifteen minutes. The dominant maxims of play were now: 1. Get the ball out of your own half; 2. Get the ball into the opposition half, and look to the heavens for a blessing. Carloway had an initial chance to “kill” it once again, when Miller seized on to a breaking ball on the centre line, surged forward to 20 metres from goal on the right, then sent a nasty dipping shot which Gillies had to take two attempts to grasp.

However, the mountain just became that bit steeper when “Tiger” was advised to have an early shower for tripping constant pain-in-Carloway’s neck, “Barvas”, as he raced forwards on the left, 22 metres from goal. Now every part of the field beyond midway within the Blues’ half became a no-go area for anyone in a Real Madrid kit. Congestion repulsed the Siarachs, rather than skilful defence. Westside, in turn, now had no option but to employ the skill of “Barvas” wide to cross, or Maclean to loft the Martin Peters forward, and cross their fingers. However, Maclean was next to depart so that option disappeared but just on the whistle Lady Fortune finally turned her back on the Siarachs, when a final *melée* in the Blues’ box saw the ball break to the right of Craigie for “Noe” to stab the ball home from 10 metres but, amazingly, the old war-horse got across to pull off a save with his fingertips that Lev Yashin would have struggled to emulate.

Extra-time: second period: Carloway 4 (4) Westside 3 (3)

As the web-site says, this match had everything - except a penalty - although West had a reasonable claim right at the death, when Sullivan went down on the edge of the box: three sendings-off; seven goals, including a cracking 30-metre special; a clanger; an own goal; a player scoring for both sides; and a stunning goalkeeping performance from a senior citizen. After a bewildering opening fifteen minutes, when the Dad’s Army figures in Carloway colours must have felt they had travelled back in a time tunnel to face the vintage Peter and Robert Mackenzie, “Nomie”, “Lava”, and David Martin of Lochs circa 2006/7/8, Carloway established themselves in bloodless trench-type warfare against their darkest enemies.

It was exhilarating, yet terrifying at times, to watch the bone-shuddering conflict onfield. However, regularly a shaft of sunlight would appear, as the artists on show - Eachainn Miller, Dan Crossley, Ali “Barvas”, Innes Iain, etc. - would remind you that skill, talent, imaginative creativity, and match overview, is not just the preserves of the Iniestas, the Maradonas, or the Baggios. Nor is solid defence, holding, dead ball expertise. After all, the game requires all the talents. Here it was, in front of us, and we didn’t have to pay a fortune to see it, or our clubs to spend millions to provide it. The 90 minutes in that

sense was a classic experience; the unfortunate side-effect being that one side had to lose, but if that didn't happen, the whole evening would have been rendered pointless. As "*Highlander*" said, "*There can only be one winner*", and that fact gives meaning to football.

Carloway Man of the Match: Gordon Craigie.

Westside Man of the match: Innes Iain Morrison.

Man of the Match: Gordon Craigie (Carloway).