

Lewis and Harris League :

## **Carloway 1 (1) Lochs 3 (1)**

*Jake Allan 23*

*Jim O'Donnell 27, 47, 63*

*At Cnoc a' Choilich, Carloway.*

*Friday, 20.5.16.*

*Referee: Neil Macritchie.*

*Carloway line judge: Calum "Cobby" Macleod (first half); Ross "Tiny" Maclean/ Dan Crossley (second half).*

*Lochs line judge: Calum Murdo Mackenzie.*

**CARLOWAY:** 4-4-2.

*Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.*

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

*Gordon Craigie*

*Kevin "Barra" Macneil Ali "Laxay" Macdonald Donald "D.I." MacIennan ■ Joe Armstrong*

*Callum "Beag" Mackay Domhnall Mackay (capt.) ■ Eachainn Miller Archie "Statto" MacDonald*

*Jake Allan Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald*

*Subs. used: Billy Anderson (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 69; Euan Gilmour (Joe Armstrong) 89; Jake Macleod (Jake Allan) 92.*

*Sub. not used: Ross "Tiny" Maclean.*

*Yellow cards: Donald "D.I." MacIennan 56; Domhnall Mackay 76.*

### **LOCHS.**

*Manager: David Macmillan.*

*Darren Wilson Jim O'Donnell*

*Chris Mackay David Macmillan Angie Campbell (capt.) David Macritchie*

*Daniel "Nipper" Mackenzie Donald "Nomie" Macdonald Roddie Morrison ■ Neil Houston*

*James Macleod ■*

*Subs. used: Peter "Robbie" Mackenzie (Roddie Morrison) 35.*

*Yellow cards: Roddie Morrison 35; James Macleod 64.*

Wednesday's exit from the Jock Stein, though a major disappointment, did give cautious grounds for optimism. An experimental side had performed admirably, with spirit and purpose, and it was only in the final third of the field, that there still remained concern. New boys, Joe Armstrong and Callum "Beag" Mackay, also proved major assets-in-the-making. All of which was gratifying, considering that it was the League Champions, the ever-dangerous Lochs, that were tonight's visitors, not the most favoured opposition when a club is attempting to collect its first League points of the season.

Carloway performed reasonably solidly in their four meetings with the Maroons last season, despite losing three and drawing the fourth. In the corresponding fixture last season, it had taken a Robert Jones strike early in the second half to break down the Blues' resistance and at Leurbost in the Jock Stein, a month later, a Robert Mackenzie goal in the 83rd minute did likewise. However, the true heartbreaks in their encounters with Lochs were when a 91st minute David Macmillan free-kick secured the ABC Cup, 2-1, for the Leurbost men four days later, before a hotly-disputed 94<sup>th</sup> (!!!!) minute penalty gave Lochs the opportunity to force a 2-2 draw in the return League game at Leurbost in mid-June, a match best remembered by Carloway for a sublime Gordon "Tago" Macdonald lob over James Macleod for the

Blues' second.

Tonight, of course, the suspended Dan Crossley and Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur were ineligible (as Crossley will be for next week's Coop quarter-final with Benbecula), but, thankfully, Eachainn Miller was fit to return in central midfield, between the captain and "Statto", so Kevin "Barra" Macneil was pulled further to the right and backwards behind Callum "Beag", to a right back/wing half role, similar to that often performed by "Laxay" on the left. Carloway still persevered with Allan and "Dokus" up front, albeit with the latter remaining deep, to solve their chronic inability to convert chances into goals, while there was a welcome re-appearance for former great, Billy Anderson, in the bull-pen, beside promising youngsters, Ross "Tiny" Maclean, Euan "Bernera" Gilmour, and Jake Macleod. Further good news for Na Gormaich was the absence of perennial pains-in-the-neck, Peter and Robert Mackenzie, from the Maroons, plus ace striker Johnny Smith and midfield animateur/ striker, Robert Jones, though the remaining core - "Nomie"/Morrison/"Nipper"/Macmillan/Campbell/O'Donnell - looked intimidating enough.

As ever, the game was marred by a gusty, unpredictable wind, which favoured neither side, as they grappled for early control of the centre. Both lines pushed high and the central third of the field became a crowded battlefield, though Carloway managed to establish a slight edge in the opening 25 minutes. However, despite the open spaces behind either defence, chances were nil till the 22nd minute when Na Gormaich went ahead, with considerable assistance from the elements. "Nomie" and Morrison combined within their box to clear straight outwards a menacing cross from Callum "Beag", trying to pick out Allan in the centre. The ball came to "Dokus" 22 metres from goal, but his immediate connect was mishit rightwards and was curved outwards towards the bye-line. The Lochs back-line had moved out with the ball and there was a suggestion Allan and "Statto" might be offside, but the pacy "Beag" caught the ball anyway, 10 metres from the line, and whipped it square across goal for an unmarked Allan to thunder it into the roof of the net (1-0).

Carloway immediately pushed to press their advantage, but were instantly punished on the counter-attack. "Nipper" and "Nomie" combined to push the ball outward for Campbell to lift the ball forward to the right, allowing Wilson to race on behind Armstrong and to the left of "Laxay". From the right edge of the Blues' box, as "D.I." and "Laxay" gravitated left to cover, Wilson fired a daisy-cutter shot/cross past the advancing Craigie's right. It might have crept inside the far post, but O'Donnell came steaming in, unmarked, from the left to make sure, from 10 metres (1-1).

A wind-driven Carloway didn't wilt. On the half-hour Miller once more picked out "Barra" moving down the right. He wall-passed with "Beag" and before "Nipper" could get his foot in, delivered a low, squared cross, 16 metres from the line. Morrison and Allan clashed in the centre, and the Carloway man managed to get his foot to it, as he fell backward, but Macleod pulled off an astounding save low to his left.

Na Gormaich continued to live dangerously at the back, pressuring right to exploit the pace of "Beag" against "Nipper", but it was the 37th minute before he escaped his marker again to send in yet another low cross, this time from 18 metres. Allan

again connected, but was blocked. "Dokus" followed up but, from 20 metres, he cleared the bar by a metre. In 40 minutes an up-and-under from "Dokus", to the right of the centre-line, sent Allan running between "Nomie" and Mackenzie, but Macleod came out to meet him and did enough, face-to-face, to make the striker toe-poke the ball wide of goal from 18 metres. The final chance of the half, two minutes into added-on time, saw a Macmillan corner from the Lochs' left being scrambled out by "D.I.", only to be driven in again by Campbell in the centre, 20 metres from goal. The ball broke left and O'Donnell first-timed it from 16 metres past Craigie, but it flashed across goal and two metres wide of Carloway's left-hand post.

**Half-time: Carloway 1 Lochs 1**

It had been an open first-half with na Gormaich having more of the ball and the play but, generally, Lochs had been untroubled and looked increasingly dangerous breaking through a forward-pressing Blues' defence. There had been less action in the last third, in either half, than might be expected, given the high back-lines, no doubt due to the efficiency of both defences. However, the crucial centre of the park was still up for grabs, as Macmillan, Campbell, Miller, and Mackay strove for control.

It was a stalemate, although Lochs immediately disturbed this fine balance. In 46 minutes an early corner, on their right, landed perfectly for O'Donnell, 12 metres out in the centre, to half-jump and send the ball cleanly into the top of the net (1-2).

Whatever words of wisdom David Macmillan had come up with it at the interval had clearly hit the button as Lochs dictated play from the off, through Campbell, Macmillan, and Wilson. Another corner, in 55 minutes, this time from Macmillan on the Lochs' left was head-glanced inwards by O'Donnell 14 metres out by the near post, but "Laxay" managed to clear the ball away off the line.

On the hour it was Macritchie's turn to carry the ball to the edge of the area, having been supplied by Campbell on the centre line, but from the right edge of the box, he stroked the ball low and a metre outside Craigie's right-hand post. The Blues were struggling, as what had worked at Garrabost on the Wednesday wasn't cutting it tonight, and the formation became increasingly distorted to a fluid 3-5-1-1, exploited mercilessly by class acts like Macmillan and Angie Campbell.

In 62 minutes the game was, more or less, over. Yet another Macmillan corner from the Blues' right came winging over perfectly, curving in high across the assembled mass in the centre, and O'Donnell, lurking unmarked by the far post, did not even have to jump as he reverse-headed it home from 8 metres for his hat-trick (1-3).

A minute later Carloway had an immediate chance of redemption. A Miller diagonal from the centre-line freed Calum "Beag" down the right and as he progressed into the right of the Lochs box, he touched the ball inwards past the out-rushing keeper, only to be sent flying. However, Macleod redeemed himself by choosing correctly, and diving low to his left to block "Barra's" carefully-placed spot-kick.

As Lochs held, inviting Carloway to commit, opportunities got fewer for the Blues. A Macmillan free-kick on the Lochs' left, 22 metres from the bye-line, thundered against the wall, and was booted clear, before "Barra" had to back-track furiously to head back to "Van Der Sar" from the edge of the box, under pressure from Wilson

who still did well to get a foot in to touch the running ball against Craigie.

Needs must when the devil drives. The introduction of Billy Anderson brought an instant co-ordination and creative imagination to central midfield, linking with Miller to initiate forward movement from a re-jigged front-line, Calum "Beag" going left, Allan right, and "Statto" in the centre. However, the chances still favoured the Maroons. Another Macmillan free-kick, from 20 metres in the centre, breached the wall but ran straight to Craigie. Five minutes later Lochs broke once more, when Mackenzie whipped the ball out to Campbell, who immediately sent O'Donnell clear on the left. He made the left edge of the box and as "Van Der Sar" approached, lifted the ball over him, but over the left side of the Carloway bar also.

In the third minute of added-on time, Carloway had their final chance of the night but were again thwarted by an excellent Macleod stop. An Anderson free-kick from the left side of the halfway line came in high to Mackay on the left of the Lochs' goal, 16 metres out, and he headed diagonally inward to the far post. "Statto" got his head to it, a metre out by the post, but Macleod somehow managed to block his point-blank header for a corner on his left.

**Full-time: Carloway 1 (1) Lochs 3 (1)**

No one can really question the final result. In fact, it could have been worse, if "D.I." had been red-carded in the 56th minute for deliberate handball, although James Macleod was equally lucky to escape greater punishment for the penalty incident. So Carloway tried again. Failed again. Did they fail better? Not really, as the co-ordinated impetus that they displayed for a large part of the Point game was missing tonight, despite a promising start. This is surprising as one would think the re-appearance of Eachainn Miller would have improved the mix.

Of course, the reason could be the quality of the opposition, as David Macmillan marshalled his back-line expertly, including young newcomer, David Houston, and still had time to link with midfield supremo, Angie Campbell, to supply quality balls to Jim O'Donnell on the left and Darren Wilson on the right. Domhnall Mackay was unable to establish his usual stonewall presence in the centre because of this and so Miller lacked his customary support.

Likewise, the back four missed their perpetual shield, and with "Barra" being asked to cover the entire right behind Calum "Beag", they frequently became a thin back three, not the best guard against incisive opponents like the Lochies. Arguably, the captain's best position is in central defence, as "D.I." and "Tiger" seem much more sure of themselves with him between them (how these two miss their teacher, "Gus"!!!), and this in turn frees "Laxay" up for the position he excels at, left-half.

Nevertheless, Joe Armstrong further enhanced his credentials tonight, under pressure as he often was, and Callum "Beag" contributed that pace and width, vital to success in this environment, despite the experienced "Nipper's" close attention (and Alec Lamb's at Garrabost). However, creation of goal-scoring chances still remains the central problem, despite the whole-hearted efforts of "Statto" and Jake Allan. The overview and creative contribution of Billy Anderson came too late to alter the outcome, but this is understandable, as, like "Dokus" and "Sqweg", fitness is a concern and the quality they provide has to be carefully rationed.

**Carloway Man of the Match: Donald "D.I." MacIennan.**

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