

Moldova Lewis Cup Round 1:

Carloway 4 (3) Westside 3 (0)

*Dan Crossley 22 Luke Mackay 55
Eachainn Miller 31 Martainn Shields 74
Archie "Statto" Macdonald 35 Kenneth "Parry" Macleod 78
Domhnall Mackay 89*

At Cnoc a' Choilich, Carloway, 19:00.

Monday, 18.7.16.

Ref.: Derek Nicolson (Aberdeen).

Carloway line judge: Alasdair "Tiger" Macarthur.

Westside line judge: David "Lurch" Murray (second half)

CARLOWAY: 4-4-1-1.

Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.

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

Ross "Tiny" Maclean

*Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Donald "D.I." MacIennan Ali "Laxay" Macdonald Joe Armstrong
Callum "Beag" Mackay Dan Crossley Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Eachainn Miller Archie "Statto"
MacDonald*

Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald

Subs. not used: Gordon Craigie; Euan Gilmour; Jake Macleod; Owen "Tiger" Macarthur; Ben Smith.

WESTSIDE: 4-4-2.

Manager: "Murchadh" Macdonald.

Asst. Manager: Alex Matheson.

Luke Mackay Conor Mackay

*Martainn Shields Kenneth "Parry" Macleod Scott Graham Colin George Morrison
Duncan Maclean (capt.) Euan Shirkie Donnie "Noe" Smith Gordon Campbell*

Iain Gillies

Sub. used: Dan Macphail (Conor Mackay) 61.

Yellow card: Scott Graham 56.

After last week's borefest versus Back, which did, nevertheless, deliver a welcome, if fortuitous, three points, Carloway's onerous task tonight was to overcome their west coast rivals, Westside, in the last cup of the season. Some might think that it is surprising that the Blues led the Siarachs 2-1 in face-to-face meetings this year, yet after a 1-2 reverse in the League in late April at Barvas, later the same week na Gormaich had edged their opponents, 4-3 after extra-time, in the ABC Cup Final, a contest that already seems like some obscure event that occurred during the Middle Ages. A win over Back in the Jock Stein had followed but then Carloway's form nose-dived dramatically, with five straight defeats, resulting in early elimination from the Jock Stein, the HAC, and League contention.

Desperate times require desperate measures. The management decided youth should be given its chance and, gratifyingly, seven straight victories were recorded before the Blues once again faced the Siarachs, three weeks ago, at home in the League. Any opinion of the justice of the result depends on which side you support, but na Gormaich were delighted to walk away with a 2-1 triumph. The feelings of the

Westside players are unrecorded.

Tonight, in what would be the two rivals' final meeting of 2016, the Siarachs relished the opportunity for revenge, though they had to achieve this minus defensive stalwart, Johnnie Wallace, and two potential game-changers in Innes Iain Morrison and Ali "Barvas" Macleod. Tonight Euan Shirkie partnered Donnie "Noe" Smith in central defence, while Conor Mackay started up front, with Kenny "Parry" Macleod behind, beside Scott Graham. No doubt the Blues were delighted to note the absence of perennial thorns in their flesh, "Barvas" and Morrison, especially as they were able to welcome the return of midfield playmakers, Dan Crossley and Eachainn Miller, and emerging star, Joe Armstrong, at left-back. Armstrong's return at left-back allowed "Laxay" to step right to partner "D.I." in central defence and Domhnall Mackay to move forward into the Makélélé rôle, to supply steel between the artistry of Crossley and Miller. With Jake Allan still unavailable, Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald was charged with leading the line.

The game opened in full-on derby style, at 100 m.p.h., as a strong westerly supported the Blues in their attempts to gain an early edge in midfield. Crossley's explosive pace and enthusiasm was evident from the start and in 3 minutes, he robbed Gordon Campbell just inside the Siarach half, on West's right touch-line, steamed forward like a rocket to the bye-line, and then squared a low bullet-like ball across the face of goal, but "Dokus" arrived a metre too late to convert in the centre and Maclean whipped the ball away.

In 13 minutes Mackay duplicated "Raymond's" effort at the other end, when he wriggled between "Laxay" and Armstrong to Carloway's left bye-line, checked inwards, then side-stepped the arriving "Laxay" and "D.I." before lobbing a cross-shot from 16 metres beyond "Tiny" but a couple of metres outside the far corner of bar and post. In 20 minutes a mighty "D.I." free-kick from the centre circle came in high and fast at Gillies who could only parry it straight outwards. "Statto" met it first on the edge of the area but his instant right-foot side-foot was blocked and cleared by Morrison directly in front of the centre of goal.

Two minutes later na Gormaich's early ascendancy was emphasized with the arrival of the first goal. A strong "Statto" corner came in head-high from the Siarach left and was headed straight outwards by Morrison, 8 metres out in front of goal. "D.I." Macleod headed it back in from 16 metres and it glanced off a West head before being headed on strongly by Crossley, high into the left of the West net (1-0).

As West struggled to contain Crossley and Miller in the centre of the park, Crossley once more slipped the ball through for "Dokus" to break forward on a run, before checking leftwards, 20 metres from goal, to send a crisp left-footer rising into the top of Gillies's right-hand side netting. A minute later Scott Graham repeated this feat with a break through the centre but his right-footer from 22 metres crept just outside "Tiny's" right-hand post.

However, in 31 minutes, a run and shot by Eachainn Miller had better luck. Bursting forward from the centre circle, he unleashed a powerful daisy-cutter from 22 metres. The left-foot drive came in low, straight to Gillies, who appeared to have it covered as he knelt to hold, but the power of the drive thwacked it through his hands, then his legs, and home (2-0).

For a period West were in danger of losing their shape after this unfortunate mishap and it got even worse four minutes later when a "Tiger" cross from midway within the Siarach half, out on the Carloway right, reached an unmarked "Statto", moving into the centre of the West box. His powerful header whacked against Gillies's upper shoulder, then bounced upwards, but moved too fast for the flailing keeper to hold or paw outwards, and whizzed up over him and into the roof of the net (3-0).

Half-time: Carloway 3 Westside 0

If Mystic Meg had predicted the Blues would lead 3-0 at half-time, both squads and fans would have said, "Aye, right!" Yet, after an even opening 15 minutes, Carloway had started to gel sweetly as a unit, then move forward cohesively and rapidly. Westside had been unable to hold the centre as a line, and clearly their main task in the second half was to devise a method to subdue Carloway's creative centre.

The effervescent imagination and pace of Crossley, which in turn energized the creative Miller and spread throughout the Blues, had shown no sign of flagging as the half progressed, and this form continued into the opening exchanges of the half. However, a whole-hearted co-ordinated assault by the Siarachs brought an early breakthrough. A back three option appeared to have been adopted by West, allowing Smith to drive through the centre, and this led to a Duncan Maclean free-kick in 54 minutes on the Carloway left, 22 metres from the bye-line. A high, nasty ball skidded perfectly in front of "Tiny", who could only beat it out to the edge of the box, from which a snap right-footer from Morrison flew just past na Gormaich's right-hand post.

A minute later Shields, largely isolated in the first half, was fed to beat the Blues' high back-line, 10 metres within the Carloway half, on their right touch-line. He left "Tiger" for dead as he made the bye-line, and then delivered a sharp diagonal cut-back, which Luke Mackay met exquisitely in the centre of the edge of the box, to clip a low left-footer wide of "Tiny" to his left (3-1).

Moments later the good work was almost undone when a high ball into the West box broke left in front of "Statto" who carried the ball left, but Gillies read his intention and moved out to his right to block his attempt from 12 metres for a corner.

With the arrival of the combative Macphail in midfield on the hour, Smith shrank back as Shirkie was sacrificed, and it soon became clear momentum was swinging behind the Barvas men. An enlivened Shields began to torment down the left. In 63 minutes he again outpaced the line to the bye-line, but Smith was challenged as he

went for the winger's cut-back in front of goal and could only squeeze the ball past "Tiny's" right-hand post from 12 metres. Moments later, Shields was supplied again on the left, just inside the Carloway half, but an incisive "Tiger" intervention allowed the defender to discover there was a whole new other half to the pitch. Twenty metres from the line, he sent a perfect squared ball to the arriving "Dokus" in the centre, but the unmarked striker sent his low strike two metres wide of the far post.

In 69 minutes a perfect de Boer, diagonally forward by Miller from the centre circle, released Crossley on the break into the left of the Siarach box, but as Gillies rushed out, the midfielder's right-foot flick was parried well by the keeper a metre outside his far-side left-hand post. However, in 74 minutes, it was definitely game-on, when a thunderous Shields free-kick from 23 metres in the centre almost lifted the roof of the Blues' net (**3-2**).

Three minutes later the winger was unlucky not to register again after he was supplied on the left, but instead of racing off to the bye-line, he cut in 20 metres from goal, and whipped round to send a low right-footer crashing off the inside base of "Tiny's" right-hand post, the ball then spinning across goal and off to the left. The ball was not cleared decisively and eventually returned into the Blues' box, where it broke for "Parry" to drive home from 12 metres (**3-3**).

In an incredible 180° turn in fortune, Carloway were now defending desperately, trying to run down the clock, but still managed to break in 83 minutes when a hoisted ball from Mackay, on the right centre-line, saw Gillies challenged as he went for the high ball, the ball breaking right, only to be knocked back across goal. Callum "Beag" nodded it goalwards, but Campbell managed to block it with his right hip and clear.

Another break, in 89 minutes, saw Miller trick his way into the box, but as he made space for himself on the right, 14 metres from goal, he appeared to be brought down by Smith(?). Iain Gillies guessed right on the penalty to pull off an astonishing stop, low to his right, but Mackay, following up, blasted the rebound into the far corner (**4-3**). Nevertheless, na Gormaich still had to endure a prolonged melée deep in added-on time around their penalty spot before the whistle sounded.

Full-time: Carloway 4 (3) Westside 3 (0)

This contest was yet another remarkable experience to add to the list of memorable west Lewis derbies. "A game of two halves", springs to mind, although such a scenario doesn't usually end with a sucker punch, as that was, in fact, what it was, as most spectators were probably expecting any fourth goal to arrive at the other end.

The key to this tie was, of course, decided in the centre, as it is in most games. Carloway controlled it for nearly an hour, but once West rejigged their line-up, flooding this area, that, coupled with heavy marking on the Blues' creative centre -

Crossley and Miller - (who were also tiring, no doubt) - the last half-hour belonged to the Siarachs, who, once more, must have left Cnoc a' Choilich feeling aggrieved at how it all turned out.

However, the number of chances each side created was fairly even so, as usual, it came down to who took more than the other side. Nevertheless, the first hour was encouraging for na Gormaich but to play at that pace, with such invention, for a full game is a big ask! Yet, the shape of the starting side, the way it held under extreme pressure and still endeavoured to threaten, holds promise.

Carloway Man of the Match: Dan Crossley.

Westside Man of the Match: Donnie "Noe" Smith.