

Moldova Lewis Cup Semi-Final:

Carloway 1 (1) Point 0 (0)

Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald 27

At Cnoc a' Choilich, Carloway.

Wednesday, 17.8.16, 6.30 p.m.

Referee: Calum "Chancy" Macleod.

Stand-side line judge: Kenneth "Bugsy" Smith.

Far-side line judge: Andrew Macaulay

CARLOWAY: 4-4-1-1.

Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.

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

Gordon Craigie

Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Donald "D.I." MacLennan Ali "Laxay" Macdonald Joe Armstrong

Callum "Beag" Mackay Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Eachainn Miller Dan Crossley

Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald

Jake Allan ■

Subs. used: Patrick Vigurs ■ (Dan Crossley) 81; Ben Smith (Callum "Beag" Mackay) 85.

Subs. not used: Ross "Tiny" Maclean; Stuart "Gochan" Macleod; Euan Gilmour.

Yellow cards: Jake Allan (inappropriate comments) 37; Patrick Vigurs (time-wasting) 86.

POINT: 4-4-2.

Manager: Angus "Stoodie" Mackay.

Ali "Wally" MacIver Andrew Murray

Alex Macdonald Angus Macdonald Hugh Morrison Andrew Morrison

Daniel Macleod Alistair Gillies (capt.) Stephen Campbell Andrew "Mowgli" Macleod ■

Ally Lamont

Subs. used: No. 17 (Andrew Murray) 65; No. 12 (?) 88.

Subs. not used: Donald "Spike" Smith.

Yellow card: Andrew "Mowgli" Macleod (unsporting behaviour) 71.

After the euphoria of EaF success on Friday at Leurbost, the Blues returned from the stratosphere to a competition which, together with the Coop Cup, initiated Carloway's emergence as genuine League and cup contenders on the islands. It was in the first week of September 2012 that na Gormaich entered the modern era by winning their first trophies for 55 years. On the 1st September, 2012, the Blues finally got their name on the Coop Cup, after failure two years before at the final hurdle to Westside, 1-3, by winning 7-6 in a dramatic penalty shoot-out over Back, following a 1-1 draw in normal time. Six days later, at Col Uarach, na Gormaich had to endure the nail-biting torture of another penalty shoot-out, in the Moldova Lewis Cup Final against Westside, after a stunning Calum Tom Moody header, off a glorious "Gus" Maciver cross, grabbed the Blues a late equalizer in a 3-3 draw. The same player followed this by scoring the winning penalty in a 4-3 shoot-out.

The League, ABC and Jock Stein Cups followed in 2013, as Carloway bathed in the glory of their greatest-ever run. However, retaining a trophy is the Blues' next

challenge, as na Gormaich have had to wait till this season to return to trophy-winning form, having already secured the ABC in late April and the EaF last week. The objective now was to make it a treble. Of course, there was the (not) small problem of an imposing bunch of lads from the east who certainly thought otherwise.

Results against the Rubhachs have been less than inspiring this season. In early May, Point had little trouble disposing of a lacklustre Blues side, 1-3, at Cnoc a' Choilich in the League. Indeed, at half-time, 3-up, they threatened to engulf the Blues. Fortunately for the locals, the home side rallied slightly in the second (or the Rubhachs lost interest), and "Dokus" made the score-line more respectable. Two weeks later, at Garrabost, a much improved Carloway battled gamely in the Jock Stein and appeared to have secured a 2-1 victory, before the giant figure of perennial pain-in-the-a...., Elliott Rudall, spoiled the party with an 87th-minute equalizer. A 2-3 shoot-out misery followed. On 4th July a return to Garrabost, in the reverse League game, saw an improvement in all-round performance from Carloway but, also, a textbook lesson in "*How to Take Chances*" from Stewart Munro, Hugh Morrison and that man again, Elliott Rudall, this last a 24-metre screamer which crashed home off the under-side of the bar.

On the plus side for the Blues, however, this evening's encounter arrived on the back of a 7-game winning streak, na Gormaich having won 14 of their last 16 games, the defeat against Point and the 1-5 Coop Cup thrashing by lochdar Saints the only hiccups in the midst of this run. Tonight, the Blues were gratified to note the absence of Point anchor-man, Rudall, while welcoming the return of Jake Allan and Patrick Vigurs, and the re-appearance of Ben Smith, Euan Gilmour, and Stuart "Gochan" Macleod on the bench. Gordon "Van Der Sar" Craigie was preferred in goal but Andrew "Tago" Maciver and Archie "Statto" MacDonald were unavailable.

One improvement on Friday night's contest was the absence of any Biblical deluge, though this meant perpetual midge infestation for the 90 minutes. However, calm and sunny conditions don't always guarantee brisk, exciting play and the opening 20 minutes or so barely roused the interest of the few spectators. Carloway did have an early midfield edge, despite Crossley looking out of sorts and "Dokus" and Allan making little impression on Gillies *et al* up front. Miller and Mackay laboured hard to create a cohesive aggression, with Miller seeking every opportunity to release the de Boer for Calum "Beag" on the right or Allan in the lead.

The Rubhachs, likewise, were less than dangerous as "Wally" and Murray lay extra-deep, with Maciver and Hugh Morrison playing across a high Blues' back-line, rather through it. It took 11 minutes for either side to threaten, a Crossley corner on the Carloway left reaching the far post, where Domhnall Mackay, unchallenged, 10 metres out by the far post, managed to nod the ball just outside Lamont's left-hand post. In 15 minutes Point threatened when a "Wally" free-kick, 20 metres from goal in the centre, took a heavy deflection off the wall and whizzed a metre past Craigie's right-hand post.

Two minutes later, neat interplay between “Dokus” on the centre-line, rightwards to Callum “Beag”, then straight on to the over-lapping “Tiger” saw the full-back beat his marker to cross 16 metres from the line. The ball reached Allan in the centre but its angle made it slightly too difficult to connect with cleanly and his header went well wide of the Point left-hand post. Five minutes later a “Dokus” free-kick, midway within the Point half, broke out towards Allan on the edge of the box, but his attempt went straight up.

As Carloway continued to force the play into the opposition half, Allan, midway within the half, managed to nod the ball sideways to “Dokus”, who side-stepped his marker to the left and supplied the breaking Crossley, coming at speed down the left touch-line. His early forward diagonal was won by the arriving Allan on the edge of the box, but under pressure from Gillies he could only head the ball onwards and upwards, a couple of metres over the bar.

Finally, in 27 minutes, it all came right for the Blues when “D.I.” won the ball, just inside his own half, and moved forward towards the right touch-line. From the half-way line he delivered a long low ball forward, which appeared to be missed by a couple of Rudhachs, before “Dokus” latched on to it, 20 metres from goal, to the right side of the box. He fell off his marker to carry the ball into the box and from 16 metres stroked a beautiful low screamer to the right of the advancing Lamont and just inside the far post (1-0).

Point eventually came close in the 34th minute when Morrison freed “Wally” on the right. He made the line, checked, then side-stepped backwards away from Armstrong, to whip in a low squared cross, 16 metres from goal. Andrew Morrison, “D.I.”, and “Laxay” all went for the ball around the penalty spot, the Point player went down, and the ball spun away over the goal-line, to Craigie’s right. Everyone looked at the referee. “*Goal-kick*”, he indicated.

Chances for both sides concluded the half. In 44 minutes a “Dokus” free-kick, 16 metres from the bye-line, outside the box to Lamont’s left, came whirling in, high by his left-hand post. A combination of the junction of bar and post and Lamont’s fists managed to knock the ball outwards, only to be met by Miller, 12 metres from goal in the centre. He whacked it instantly, but his low, right-foot drive was a foot outside the Rudhachs’ right-hand post. In added-on time “Wally” tried his luck from 24 metres, on the Point left, but his free-kick effort just dipped inches over the left-hand side of the Carloway bar.

Half-time: Carloway 1 Point 0

A rather muted affair, sporadically forced into life by Miller, Mackay, Hugh M. and “Wally”, had been rather disappointing, perhaps, for a contest between the ABC/EaF Cup holders and the JS Cup holders/League leaders. Point had scarcely threatened, despite “Wally’s” Sylvain Wiltord impression and the industry of Hugh Morrison, while the few chances the Blues had created had been squandered in a mixture of

bad luck and class defending. Initially, there was little change in the second.

In 53 minutes “Dokus” trickery in the centre, 20 metres from goal, saw him move rightwards to supply the driving Crossley square, but a collection of defenders rapidly converged to crowd out his shot for a corner to Lamont’s right. In 59 minutes an Alex Macdonald free-kick, 24 metres from goal in the centre, flew well over. Three minutes later a throw-in on the Point left, midway within the Carloway half, allowed “Wally” to shake off “Tiger” for a moment to break into the left of the box, but the angle was tight and Craigie was able to block his drive from 16 metres, high to his right, for a corner.

Momentum, plus possession and territory, appeared to be drifting inexorably from the Blues, despite the persistence of Mackay and Miller, as the Rudhachs tried to force the pace to energize their attacking options. Na Gormaich’s back-line were increasingly forced to step backwards and backwards, though Carloway did manage to break in the 66th minute. The tireless Miller was supplied midway within the Point half, out on their left touch-line and, as usual, sought to deliver the elusive forward breaker. This time he found Crossley, 14 metres from goal towards the near post, but his header lacked power and Lamont held easily, high by his left-hand post.

In 70 minutes yet another “Wally” free-kick, on Point’s left touch-line, 24 metres from Craigie, forced the keeper to react quickly low to his left, to smother. Six minutes later Maciver did even better but was again foiled, this time by the woodwork. Again 24 metres out, slightly left of centre, “Wally” was within inches of getting it spot-on, making “Van Der Sar’s” cross-bar twang like a bow-string before the ball rebounded upwards and away. A minute later, as Point attempted to turn the screw, “Wally” was played through by Morrison but Craigie reacted quickly to race out and block him, one-on-one, low to his right, 14 metres from goal.

By now, Carloway’s back-line had retreated to form a defensive wall along the edge of their area, their one-time midfield barely yards in front of them, to await the next Rudhach wave, in the hope that any breaking ball or ball won on the tackle could be played rapidly forward to allow Allan, Vigurs, or Smith to break. No chances did appear, and with the Blues’ iron men, “Tiger”, “D.I.”, “Laxay”, and Armstrong adamant to the end, no clear opportunities really appeared for Point either.

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

The best that can be said regarding tonight’s performance is that it gained yet another appearance in a Final, and that what once would have appeared to be wishful thinking, i.e. a treble, is still achievable. Na Gormaich stumbled over the finishing line, no doubt regretting their inability to score a clinching second goal in the first half when they had the Rudhachs on the back foot.

It was a competent, if uninspired display all-in from both sides and an onlooker might have been surprised to learn that this was Carloway’s 15th win in 17 games

and that Point were, at that point, the League's top scorers, with 41 goals in 12 fixtures. Neither side actually maintained a sustained pressure on their opponents, although Point came close in the final 20 minutes to making possession count.

Within the 90 minutes it's difficult to accept that both sides created so few "*near things*": Mackay's header and Miller's drive in the first half; "Wally's" free-kick in the second. Pace and creativity were there, but mostly play was caught up in the quicksand of midfield, with most forward movement squashed resolutely by strong defence. Carloway were unrecognizable as the same (almost) outfit that roared through the EaF Final versus Lochs; no doubt, Point diehards felt the same about their outfit, also. Perhaps it's best to relegate this evening's affair to the status of what Jimmy Connors used to describe early rounds won in any Grand Prix tournament as: "*Just another day at the office*":

Carloway Man of the Match: [Donald "D.I." MacLennan](#).

Point Man of the Match: [Hugh Morrison](#).