

A.B.C. Cup Semi Final:

## **Carloway 1 (0) Westside 3 (3)**

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver 87*

*Innes Iain Morrison 11*

*Ally Williamson 33*

*Luke Mackay 38*

*At Cnoc a' Choilich, Carloway.*

*Wednesday, 19.4.17, 18.30.*

*Referee: D.J. Maclean (Bragar)*

*Nearside line judge: Neil Macritchie.*

*Farside line judge: Kenneth "Bugsy" Smith.*

*CARLOWAY: 4-4-1-1.*

*Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.*

*Asst. Managers: Domhnall Mackay; "Gus" Maciver*

*Gordon "Van der Sar" Craigie*

*Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur ■ Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Andrew "Tago" Maciver Joe Armstrong*

*Jordan Macleod Callum "Beag" Mackay Archie "Statto" MacDonald ■ Sven Wiltshire*

*Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald*

*Fraser "Frazmac" Macleod*

*Subs. used: Ali "Laxay" Macdonald (Sven Wiltshire) 45; Gordon "Tago" Macdonald (Jordan Macleod) 70; Billy Anderson (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 75; Stuart "Gochan" Macleod (Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur) 90.*

*Sub. not used; Andrew "Lanky" MacDonald.*

*Yellow cards: Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur 75; Archie "Statto" MacDonald 90+2.*

*WESTSIDE: 4-4-2.*

*Manager: "Murchadh" Macdonald.*

*Asst. Manager: Alex "Nibble" Matheson.*

*Luke Mackay Innes Iain Morrison*

*Martainn Shields Scott Graham Ally Williamson Lewis "Preston" Robinson*

*Shaun "Lefty" Macdonald Euan Shirkie Duncan Maclean (capt.) Gordon Campbell*

*David "Lurch" Murray*

*Subs. used: Ali "Barvas" Macleod (Luke Mackay) 59; Alex John Morrison (Martainn Shields) 74; Colin George Morrison (Shaun "Lefty" Macdonald) 83.*

*Sub. not used: Ewan Macleod.*

A frisson of expectation, and no little apprehension, always presages the approach of a west side derby, tonight's being the first of three in the next fortnight. No doubt, down Carloway way, the latter was heightened by an awareness of the Siarrachs' opening results: a 6-1 drubbing of Ness in Round One of this contest to set up tonight's tie, followed by an excellent 2-1 League win at Garrabost over last year's runners-up.

Monday the 10th's dim-bulb affair at Col Uarach was hardly likely to inspire the home side, whose numbers were much depleted despite the arrival of Jordan Macleod and Sven Wiltshire. Jake Allan, of course, has returned to Aberdeen, while midfield *animateurs*, Dan Crossley (extended knee and shoulder problems), Kevin "Barra" Macneil (at college), and Eachainn Miller (at university till mid-May), were not present to stimulate the engine room;

David Beaton and Murdo "Squegg" Macleod are only available intermittently. To make "Windy's" options even more limited, "D.I." was still suspended and the Blues' own Carvalho, Ali "Laxay" Macdonald, arguably their best defensive marker/tackler, had been delayed by work commitments and only made the bench beside Stuart "Gochan" Macleod, Andrew "Lanky" Macdonald, and returning "greats", Billy Anderson and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald. The opposition looked formidable: apart from elusive hit-men, Luke Mackay and Innes Iain Morrison, and cross-ball expert, Martainn Shields, on the left, there was a return in right midfield for Lethal Weapon, Ally Williamson, to the right of Scott Graham, in a squad so strong that Donnie "Noe" Smith and Johnnie Wallace were not missed and perennial pains-in-the neck, Ali "Barvas" Macleod and Colin George Macleod, were relegated to the bull-pen.

The two rivals collided four times last season and despite the then Champions eventually completing a more successful League campaign (only three defeats and a respectable third position), Carloway, surprisingly, triumphed on three occasions. A dismal opening League 1-2 reversal at Barvas in Siberian conditions served as a rehearsal for the ABC Cup Final at Goathill four days later, though that affair turned out to be its polar opposite, in terms of excitement, unpredictability, and incident. A 30-metre rocket from Innes Iain Morrison gave West an early initiative before "D.I.'s" bullet-header and a misunderstanding between Iain Gillies and Scott Graham allowed "Statto" to give the Blues an unexpected half-time lead. However, a Johnny Wallace header took the contest into an explosive extra-time that saw Dan Crossley, "Tiger", and Duncan Maclean see red, while "Statto" and Jamie Sullivan both registered, before the hapless Wallace joined the list of those unfortunates who score for both sides in a cup final.

Here in the League in July, Carloway ground out a rather fortunate 2-1 victory, which was followed by yet another engrossing encounter in the Moldove Lewis Round 1 at Cnoc a' Choilich, in which the Blues racked up a 3-0 interval lead, only to be dragged back to equality in the 78th minute by Kenneth "Parry" Macleod. As West pressed, a Carloway break ended with Miller being adjudged to have been fouled in the box, and Captain Courageous, Domhnall Mackay, stepped up to clinch an unexpected victory in the 89th minute, albeit at the second attempt after Iain Gillies had valiantly saved his initial attempt.

A brisk south-easterly sweeping across Cnoc a' Choilich should have given the Blues an early wind-assisted advantage tonight but, in fact, it was the visitors who hit the ground running - literally - and were to hold the upper hand throughout the first 45 minutes. In 5 minutes neat interplay between Mackay and "Tiger" down the Carloway right to the corner flag set up Jordan Macleod but his sharp cross was read by "Lurch" and picked off "Frazmac's" head by the near post. Three minutes later a hefty "Pongo" clearance allowed "Frazmac" to outpace Shirkie on the right but his swift pull-back from the byeline for the arriving "Dokus" was blocked away for a corner at the near post by Maclean.

Moments later, a Shields free-kick, 16 metres from the bye-line on West's left touchline, was met at the near post, 12 metres from goal, by Macdonald with his back to goal but his left-foot hook flew wide and high of Craigie's right-hand post. A minute later a lofted "Pongo" clearance was chested down by Macdonald, retreating after an earlier attack, just inside the Carloway half on West's left. He rode a "Tiger" tackle and made 20 metres from the line before sending in a sublime left-foot cross behind the high back-line for Morrison to ghost in by the near post and head-flick the ball home expertly from 12 metres over a stranded Craigie (**0-1**).

In 17 minutes a snap drive from "Frazmac", 20 metres out on the right flew wide and a metre high before na Gormaich escaped further punishment. Neat play between "Preston" and Campbell by the right corner allowed Campbell to race in square and fire in a low diagonal which brushed off Williamson *en route* to Mackay behind him. The young star, near the penalty spot, immediately whipped round and let go a right-foot attempt, which, though half-hit, trundled wide off the keeper but glanced off the far post and was cleared.

In 26 minutes yet another break out of defence on the Siarrachs' left saw Shields feed Morrison in the centre. He twisted and turned *à la Wiltord* to 20 metres from goal before slipping the ball wide to the irrepressible Shields arriving on the left. He steamed his way to the byeline, then cut back a glorious high cross which dropped perfectly for Morrison, arriving just inside the right of the Carloway box. However, his instant power-drive was hit into the earth and blocked away easily by "Tago", inside Craigie's right-hand post.

On the half-hour another move on the left saw Shields slip the ball inwards, just inside the Carloway half, to the unmarked Morrison in the centre. He held the ball before supplying "Preston", bursting forward into the right-side of the box to fire in a low cross-shot which Craigie did well to palm away low to his right for a corner. A minute later "Van Der Sar" had to be alert once more to read a beautifully-flighted left-foot free-kick from the Siarrach captain, 20 metres from goal in the centre, which curled over the wall and would have crept home, just inside his bottom left-hand corner.

The pressure was now relentless: a West corner on the Carloway left was headed back out by "Tago", only for "Preston", to the left of goal, firing it back across goal. Graham, on the penalty spot, had a whack at it and the ball came to Williamson, 10 metres out by Craigie's left-hand post, and he reacted instantly to stab it home, just inside Carloway's left-hand post (**0-2**).

Seven minutes later it was three, as Shields and Mackay re-enacted the opener. Once more the wing-man was sent free on the left, checked 22 metres from the bye-line, and then delivered an immaculate high right-foot cross from the touch-line, which made it simple for Mackay to race in between "Tago" and Armstrong and nod the ball over the undecided "Van Der Sar" from 16 metres (**0-3**).

In 42 minutes the Blues engineered a final chance to make things look more

respectable when speed-merchant, "Frazmac" raced down the left on to a long ball from "Tago". He made the bye-line, checked and cut in, and fired in a fierce drive from 12 metres which "Lurch" blocked outwards. Macleod was on to the rebound but his second attempt from 12 metres by West's right-hand post was blocked for a corner by Williamson.

**Half-time: Carloway 0 Westside 3**

The half-time Bovril must have been more than welcome for the Blues; their team talk less so. A tot of rum might have been more appropriate. Forty-five minutes chasing shadows is not that enjoyable. West's pace on the left, plus Morrison's ability to lose markers at will and beat opponents were two major problems. A self-evident move was to bring on "Laxay" in central defence beside "Tago", push Mackay forward to strengthen the midfield, and switch "Statto" left to his customary position. This did bring stability to the Blues' formation and a war of attrition commenced in midfield, stifling goalmouth opportunities for both sides, although the chances that did arrive favoured the visitors.

In 48 minutes Macdonald broke forward and slipped the ball in to Morrison who made space for himself in the centre but his low, right-foot drive from 24 metres was gathered easily by Craigie. Ten minutes later a Maclean free-kick in the centre, just inside the Carloway half, was met by Shields and Williamson inside the Blues' box, on the West right, and the breaking ball travelled diagonally across goal to the far post, but the unguarded Mackay was unable to connect with the speeding ball.

A minute later Shields tried his luck with an Andy Penman-style free-kick from 30 metres in the centre, but "Van Der Sar" got down well to his right to hold the fiery right-footer. In 64 minutes a "Dokus" free-kick 16 metres from the byeline, just outside the West box on their right, was whipped in waist-high across goal but was booted long and high downfield by Graham, and this immediately set up a race towards goal between "Tiger" and "Preston". Craigie came racing out to block at the feet of the striker, just inside the right of his box, then dive on to the breaking ball at the second attempt. Five minutes later yet another Maclean free-kick, 30 metres from goal in the centre, flashed a metre wide of Craigie's left-hand post.

In 81 minutes a disputed free-kick, just outside na Gormaich's box, on the Siarrach right, was curled in by Maclean across goal but AJ (?) could not get enough of his head to it by Blues' right-hand post and it zoomed past, well-wide.

As the final whistle approached, a simple break forward brought joy for na Gormaich. A Craigie kick-out was headed on towards the right by "Tago" on the centre-line. "Frazmac" was on to it and carried it to the bye-line, before cutting back a nasty, low drive across goal. "Tago", following up at speed, came racing in between Maclean and Campbell to meet it perfectly, in the centre, 14 metres out, and fire it home with a first-time right-footer to the right of a helpless keeper (1-3).

**Full-time: Carloway 1 (0) Westside 3 (3)**

Na Gormaich clearly struggled to come to terms with their hastily-rearranged line-up against a formidable opponent, who had the nous and confidence of potential trophy-winners this season: Domhnall Mackay dropping back into the back-line beside "Pongo" removed steel from the midfield, an absence made worse by the unavailability of "Squegg". Unfortunately, this meant "Statto" had to sacrifice his usual aggressive role at left midfield to perform an unfamiliar Makélélé role, with the untried Sven Wiltshire deputizing on the left. The most welcome addition of former goal-machine, Fraser "Frazmac" Macleod, to striker's role was blunted also by the lack of support he enjoys: a Scott Macaulay-type figure to set up the bullets that the ace assassin can run onto and test his markers frequently enough.

Early uncertainty, coupled with the free running of Mackay and Morrison, led to extended problems. Morrison as *trequantista* adopted his usual Hidegkuti routine, begging the question, who was to move forward to pick him up, while Luke Mackay, at times, appeared to be wearing Harry Potter's Cloak of Invisibility, repeatedly materializing where least desired. Shields lying deep set a test for "Tiger": should he follow him and be tested for pace, or hold the line? With Williamson and Graham able to dominate the centre due to Mackay's/"Squegg's" absences, "Statto" was compelled to alternate between protecting the central defence and moving forward to engage this aggressive mid-line. The half-time restoration of normality certainly helped but still left the glaring problems, quite clear from the evening at Col Uarach, of who is to create the chances and who is to score.

**Carloway Man of the Match: Domhnall Mackay.**

**Westside Man of the Match: Innes Iain Morrison.**