

Lewis and Harris League:

## Point 0 (0) Carloway 2 (1)

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver 26, 64*

*At Garrabost.*

*Friday, 19.5.17, 19.00.*

*Referee: Kenneth "Bugsy" Smith.*

*Point line judge: Alec Lamb*

*Carloway line judge: Alasdair "Tiger" Macarthur.*

*CARLOWAY: 4-5-1.*

*Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.*

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

*David Beaton*

*Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Donald "D.I." MacIennan Ali "Laxay" Macdonald Joe Armstrong  
Kevin "Gochan" Macleod Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Billy Anderson Archie "Statto" MacDonald  
Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald*

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver*

*Subs. used: Callum "Beag" Mackay (Billy Anderson) 64; Gordon "Tago" Macdonald (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald 75; Jordan Macleod (Kevin "Gochan" Macleod) 79.*

*Subs. not used: Gordon "Van Der Sar" Craigie; Sven Wiltshire.*

***POINT: 4-4-2***

*Manager: Angus "Stoodie" Mackay.*

*Ali "Wally" Maciver Andrew Murray*

*Andrew Macmillan Robert Jones Hugh Morrison Andrew Morrison*

*Daniel Macleod Iain "Macca" Mackenzie Alasdair Gillies (capt.) Angus Macdonald*

*Gordon "Gordie" Mackenzie*

*Subs. used: Matthew Campbell (Andrew Macmillan) 66; David Cleary (Iain "Macca" Mackenzie) 72;*

*Sub. not used: Alec Lamb; Donald "Spike" Smith; Martyn Lightbody.*

Carloway don't often arrive at Garrabost sitting above Point in the league. However, despite lifting the ABC Cup a fortnight ago with an unexpected 1-0 win over Westside and going for a third consecutive Jock Stein success next week, the Rubhachs had only won one of their four League ties so far this season, 3-0 at Fivepenny on the 8th. League defeats to Westside, Back, and Lochs sat strangely beside this rampant cup form, but the initial hiccups in the League seemed to be over, judging from their run of five straight victories before tonight, and Point might be the team *du jour* after all, not Westside. However, with three games already lost in a 14-game season, the Championship may already be unattainable as main rivals, the Siarachs, have won their first four games. Angus "Stoodie" Mackay himself told the Gazette earlier, *"To win the league I think teams can only afford one defeat - two is probably too many — "*, which is the number they lost in 2016 and 2015 and still only managed runners-up status both times.

The Blues, just like their hosts, seem to have left their desperate opening form in the campaign behind and have established a more competent *modus operandi* in their last three games, and, amazingly enough, are themselves not yet out of the running for the League.

In their four meetings last season, the clubs had mixed results. Last May, three first-half goals in 12 minutes settled the League fixture for the Rubhachs at Cnoc a' Choilich, despite Archie "Statto" MacDonald pulling one back in the second half, but ten days later, at Garrabost, the Blues thought a goal from the same player had secured a famous 1-0 victory in a Jock Stein Semi-Final, only for Elliott Rudall to level with an 87th-minute header. Extra-time saw a hotly-disputed Alasdair Gillies penalty cancel out a Jake Allan volley, before na Gormaich's misery was completed by a 2-3 penalty shoot-out defeat. Another 1-3 League reverse followed in July, before Carloway finally experienced some joy, in mid-August, with a narrow 1-0 triumph, courtesy of Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald in a rather lifeless Moldova Lewis Semi-Final.

So, not a happy ground for the Blues, their last victory here being in April 2014 in Round 2 of the ABC, 2-1, with Billy Anderson scoring the winner in added-on time, but it was two years earlier, in May 2012, that the Blues last recorded League success here, 2-0, with strikes from Calum "Caley" Macleod and Scott Macaulay besting Dan MacIennan. Remember them?

Tonight, the Blues' only change in the line-up from the 1-0 HAC win over Lochs last Friday was that Kevin "Gochan" Macleod re-appeared on the right, with emerging star, Jordan Macleod, once more unfortunate to drop to the bench, where Gordon "Van Der Sar" Craigie and Sven Wiltshire were joined by returnees, Callum "Beag" Mackay and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald, who replaced the absent Kenny "Beag" MacIennan and Ben Smith, who was serving the first of his three match suspension.

The Rubhachs were missing prime pain-in-the-posterior, the grinding colossus of Elliott Rudall, and hit-man, Stewart Munro, but their new prime *animateur*, Robert Jones, ex-Athletic/Lochs star and lately back from Oz, controlled midfield, with Andrew Murray partnering the elusive Ali "Wally" Maciver in a deep forward role.

For once, it was a beautiful early summer's evening, with no wind (or midges!!!), a clear sky, and stunning views *à la Hamish Macbeth* in every direction. Heaven on earth, in other words. Well, perhaps not for the Carloway defence. Point knew no more stumbles were permissible, if that elusive Championship title, last won in 2004, was to be won, and came immediately at the Blues with pace and imagination. For much of the half, "Wally" and Murray lay deep, close to Jones, and adopted a Dutch-style musical chairs effect. Macmillan lay wide at first, inviting "Tiger" forward, then coming fast at him, before turning in, leaving space for the back and whoever was in left midfield at the time to move into space; while Angus Macdonald appeared more as winger than defender and constantly surged to test Armstrong for pace.

The Blues' midfield were unable to establish a foothold or cohesive rhythm as Jones *et al* swarmed around them and pressed. Fortunately, "D.I." and "Laxay" were as adamantine as the Great Wall, while "Tiger" and Armstrong remained resilient, and kept Rubhach chances to a minimum. It was 16 minutes before the first possibility arose, when a "Wally" free-kick on the Point right, 18 metres from the bye-line and just in from the touch-line, was fired in low across the face of the Carloway goal but, surprisingly, no one got a touch.

In 20 minutes another "Wally" free-kick, again on their right, midway within the Carloway half, flew high and diagonal across goal, then was caught on the far side on the bye-line by Macmillan, 10 metres from goal. He cut it back instantly to the edge of the box in the centre, but Morrison's immediate right-foot hook from 20 metres cleared Beaton's left-side bar by a metre.

Then an unexpected gift from the heavens materialized for the Blues. Before this, "Gordie" had only had to deal with a couple of pass-backs; his third contribution to proceedings was to pick the ball out of the net. In 26 minutes a Rubhach attack was broken up in the centre of the Carloway half by "Laxay" and the ball worked left to "Dokus" on the left centre-line. He doubled back to play the ball inwards to "Statto", turning into the centre of the Point half. He, in turn, spotted "Tago" breaking through the middle and attempted to thread the early ball towards him. "Macca" intercepted but his attempt to clear saw the ball slice off his right foot backwards over Gillies to land perfectly for the charging "Tago". Chased by Gillies, "Tago" made 20 metres from goal, and as "Gordie" approached, he blootered a cannon-ball right-footer over him which made his crossbar twang like a bow-string, the ball blasting down off its underside on to the line, then up into the roof of the net (**0-1**). Calling it "*spectacular*" hardly does it justice. An absolute zonker!

Point were unfazed. The *totalvoetbal* style continued unabated, but the Carloway line remained resolute, if deep. In 28 minutes a cross from the Point right, right on the bye-line, was knocked outwards, then pinballed around a congested area, before Jones met it on the right edge of the box, but was blocked by "D.I." in front of goal and cleared into the Minch. On the half-hour a long ball forward from Gillies was just beating "D.I." midway within the Blues' half, the ball glancing backwards off his head onwards towards the Point right for Macdonald, moving into the right of the Carloway box, but his low drive across Beaton crept a metre beyond his far post.

Na Gormaich replied with an Anderson free-kick in 32 minutes from the centre circle, high into the box, towards "Gordie's" left. The leaping crowd failed to connect and the keeper had to react smartly, low to his left, to palm the ball away for a corner. Five minutes later "Statto", in the centre circle, fed "Gochan" moving down the right into the Point half. He was tackled heavily but the ball broke for him to move into the right corner of the Rubhach box, before unleashing a right-footer that travelled beyond the junction of right post and bar by a metre.

In 42 minutes "Wally", 10 metres into the Carloway half, played the ball forward and

rightwards to send Macdonald off on a blistering run, which saw him cut in along the edge of the box past three opponents and into the left of the box. Beaton was out like a flash to push his low drive from 12 metres away for a corner to his right at his near post.

And then the Blues had a real opportunity to kill the game when a “Dokus” corner came in high from the Carloway right. Gillies headed the ball outwards, but “Tago”, in the centre on the edge of the box, met the ball first-time with a crisp low right-footer, which was speeding home fiercely, low to “Gordie’s” right-hand post, before being blocked away for a corner by the covering defender.

### Half-time: **Point 0 Carloway 1**

Carloway had spent most of the half trapped in their own half with only the tireless “Tago” downfield. They hadn’t opted to defend. The pace and movement of the Broadbay boys had overpowered their midfield and they had been pushed back and back. Yet, astonishingly, Beaton had had little to do behind a resolute defence and, with a stroke of luck, they could have been further ahead at half-time, as Point faltered slightly approaching the whistle.

The opening exchanges in the second half continued the pattern. In 50 minutes a “Wally” corner on the Rubhach right was met by “Macca” around the penalty spot, but his right-foot connect flew a metre over the bar. Seven minutes later another “Wally” corner on the right reached Gillies, 12 metres out by the far post, but his booming header whizzed just outside Beaton’s right-hand post.

Two “Wally” free-kicks followed on the hour, the first midway within the Carloway half, 10 metres in from the touch-line on the Point left. His perfect right-foot strike came in high, then dipped diagonally across the face of goal, but escaped everyone and sped on a couple of metres outside the far post. A carbon-copy second followed three minutes later and this time Mackay, 10 metres out by the far post, was forced to make the saving header for a corner.

A minute later the tie moved further out of the home side’s reach. “D.I.” headed the resultant corner out and Mackay booted it far down the centre. Within the centre of the Point half Gillies played the ball early to Murray, moving into the Carloway half on the right. Closed down by MacDonald and Armstrong, he turned and slipped the ball diagonally back into the centre to “Macca”. “Tago” anticipated and intercepted the pass, rode “Macca’s” tackle, the ball breaking kindly for him, and then moved forward one-on-one on Gillies. The big centre-half decided, wisely, to retreat, mark, and block till support arrived. However, as “Tago” moved forward, edging rightwards, he unexpectedly unleashed a ferocious high right-footer which seemed destined for the hills of Sutherland but as it sailed over the advancing “Gordie’, it dipped, swerved a couple of times, then rocketed into the top left corner of the Point net (**0-2**).

General disbelief pervaded Garrabost. The goal might not have been up there with Dan Crossley's amazing up-and-under four years ago at Fivepenny, but it certainly was on a par with Ali "Tolsta's" 40th minute Exocet versus Lochs the year before in the Moldova Lewis.

It was difficult to figure what "Stoodie" could do next. Apart from the five minutes leading into the interval, Point had dominated territory and possession and there had been several hectic melées in the Blues' box, yet Angus Macdonald's 42-minute run and shot was the most they had to show for this. The Blues' back-line was still intact and showed no signs of weakening as the clock ran down.

In 68 minutes yet another "Wally" free-kick, 10 metres from the bye-line and just in from the Point left, came winging across but the curling right-footer was overhit. Five minutes later, a Rubhach corner from their right came in low, 12 metres from goal, but Murray's smart flick by the near post was wide of Beaton's left.

The tempo did not slacken as time approached but still Point were unable to unlock the centre and two further "Wally" free-kicks presented their last attempts. In 86 minutes a right-foot curler from the right edge of the box was only a foot outside Beaton's left-hand post, and then in the final minute a curling diagonal 18 metres from the bye-line on the Point right came over invitingly but continued beyond the far post without anyone connecting.

**Full-time: Point 0 (0) Carloway 2 (1)**

When Mourinho took Inter Milan to Champions League glory in 2010, he famously said that territory and possession were all very well and looked convincing, but it was what a team did with the ball when they had it that was important. He claimed Bayern Munich would appear to control the coming Final but that the *Nerazzurri* would prevail, because they would use the ball, when they actually had it, more incisively. He was right: Bayern had two-thirds of possession; Diego Milito scored twice. Internazionale won 2-0.

In terms of territory and possession, na Gormaich were hardly in this match, apart from that bright spell leading into the interval, yet rarely looked in great danger, thanks to outstanding performances by their centre-backs and tenacious support from their wing-backs, and resilient competitiveness all round. No one was posted missing. The fact that Point seemed to lack a full-on dedicated striker helped too, someone in the mould of "Tago" who probably slept well on Friday night after this tireless, powerful, yet lonesome *tour de force* throughout. The main concern arising from tonight's display was how the pace and imagination of the Murray/Jones/"Wally" centre-line managed to outthink and penetrate the Blues' midfield with repetitive ease, leaving it fragmented and, for the most part, unable to provide the support and ammunition required up front, as it was too busy chasing.

**Point Man of the Match: Andrew Murray.**

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