

Lewis & Harris League:

Carloway 4 (3) United 0 (0)

Andrew "Tago" Maciver 9
Domhnall Mackay (pen.) 14
Eachainn Miller 15
Gordon "Tago" MacDonald 52

At Cnoc a' Choilich, Carloway.
Monday, 12th June 2017. 7.00 p.m.
Referee: David "Spider" Macleod
Carloway line judge: Andrew Macleod
United line judge: Iain Morrison

CARLOWAY: 4-5-1.

Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.
Asst. Managers: Domhnall Mackay; Iain Angus "Gus" Maciver.

Gordon Craigie

Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Donald "D.I." Macleod Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Joe Armstrong
Jordan Macleod Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald Eachainn Miller Andrew "Tago" Maciver Gordon
"Tago" MacDonald

Dan Crossley

Subs. used: Kenny "Beag" Macleod (Eachainn Miller) 45; Callum "Beag" Mackay (Jordan Macleod) 63; Ben Smith (Gordon "Tago" MacDonald) 75; Sven Wiltshire (Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald) 84; Stuart "Gochan" Macleod (Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur) 87.
Yellow cards: None.

UNITED.: 4-4-2

MANAGER: Grant Hunter.

Kenneth Macsween Hamish MacDonald

Kyle Munro Shaun "Xavi" Macleod Kevin Flower Scott Montgomery
Andrew Macleod Chris Dempster ■ Eoin Macphee Seumas Maciver

Subs. used: Euan Macdonald (Andrew Macleod) 35 ■; James Gunn (Shaun "Xavi" Macleod) 79.
Subs. Not used:
Yellow cards: Euan Macdonald (foul play) 63; Chris Dempster (foul play) 87

Carloway were back in action on home soil on league duty less than 48 hours after their successful trip across the Sound of Harris to meet reigning Uist & Barra League Champions Barra.

Saturday's match was negotiated with a resounding 8-2 victory, despite the team being deprived of the services of all three of their recognised goalkeepers, the current top goal scorer and player of the year from 2016. Following an excellent team performance, which included a hat trick for Eachainn Miller, first starts of the season for Dan Crossley and Gordon "Tago" MacDonald, a full debut for Andrew Macleod and a first ever goal for Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur, very few adjustments would be required. The squad had a clean bill of health other than Archie MacDonald who took a knock to the knee in an accidental clash with Eachainn Miller.

The line up saw two changes made; Gordon Craigie and Andrew "Tago" Maciver

came in to the team, in place of Andrew Macleod and Archie MacDonald. Crossley continued in the advanced role leading the attack as he had done to great effect against Barra, while Maciver was deployed providing power and industry in an attacking looking midfield five along with Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald, Gordon "Tago" MacDonald. Domhnall Mackay dropped back into central defence alongside "D.I." MacLennan and flanked by full backs Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur and Joe Armstrong. Ali "Laxay" MacDonald and Billy Anderson remained absent, whilst Ben Smith and Stuart "Gochan" Macleod had completed their suspensions. They both made the substitutes bench along with Kenny "Beag" MacLennan, Callum "Beag" Mackay and Sven Wiltshire.

Tonight's match was also the club's final encounter before the mid season break due to the World Island Games. Carloway is well represented in the WIIGA football squad with Domhnall Mackay, Donald "D.I." MacLennan, Archie MacDonald and Eachainn Miller in the playing squad and Graeme "Windy" Miller part of the management set up.

Having made the worst possible start to the league campaign, when they were defeated 6-0 by Westside, Carloway's performances and results had improved, and they recorded four wins and a draw in their subsequent league fixtures. Not only had this propelled Na Gormaich up the table and into second position, hopes of a title triumph were still alive. However, consistency is critical, especially in such a tight league programme.

At the start of play, United were in third place tucked in behind Carloway, having won three and lost three of their previous matches. Further evidence of the threat of the opponents, if it were needed, was provided by the most recent encounter between the sides in August 2016, in a match also remembered for the Vigurs vacuous valedictory "strop fest." The town outfit eventually took the spoils 2-1, after Carloway had led through Ali "Laxay" MacDonald, before "D.I." MacLennan was ordered off and United hit back with two late goals through a Lewis "Preston" Robinson penalty and Hamish MacDonald. The Wasps also enjoyed similar success in 2015 at Cnoc a Choilich.

It was a pleasant dry evening, with a reasonable breeze from the south and Carloway kicked off towards the James Street end with the wind at their backs, and with a more modest than usual support in attendance. Na Gormaich quickly sought to carry on from where they had left off two days previously.

Carloway established the initiative in the opening exchanges, and in the 9th minute an inswinging corner from Gordon "Tago" MacDonald on the Carloway right was punched away under pressure by Jack MacLennan in the United goal. MacDonald gathered and sent in an inviting cross back into the box which was nodded on by Crossley centrally at the six yard line. Andrew "Tago" Maciver was lurking just behind Crossley, leftish and 8 yards range, and after allowing the ball to bounce, he nodded powerfully beyond the despairing MacLennan's outstretched arm and into the net for the opening goal of the evening, and his ninth of the season **(1-0)**.

The home side were buoyed by this early breakthrough and were further boosted in the 14th minute when the referee awarded Carloway a penalty, after MacLennan

clattered into Miller just inside the box. Despite muted protests from the visitors that the challenge was accidental, it did appear a clear cut decision. Captain Domhnall Mackay made no mistake from 12 yards, as his firm strike low to the 'keeper's right was dispatched into the net despite Maclennan's efforts **(2-0)**.

The whirlwind start to the match continued, as almost immediately from the restart there was a third goal for the Blues. Dan Crossley gathered on the left flank around halfway, looked up and sent a beautiful 30 yard pass to Miller around 20 yards from goal, who collected instantly and coolly slipped the ball past the outrushing visiting keeper **(3-0)**.

Carloway continued to press and look for further goals. Gordon "Tago" MacDonald and Jordan Macleod were providing good width, with Macleod in particular looking to use his searing pace to open up the opposing defence. Andrew "Tago" Maciver saw a curling left foot effort from around 25 yards clear the bar, and Crossley almost managed to wriggle free from Dempster and Macphee but could not direct his shot on target. Kenny "Dokus" MacDonald also shot over from the edge of the box a little right of centre.

With 30 minutes on the clock, Carloway really should have extended their lead as a number of attempts on goal could not force the ball over the line. On his own goalline, Maclennan could only partially clear under pressure from Crossley and a defender. Miller and "Xavi" scrapped for it and Andrew "Tago" Maciver then headed it back goalwards from 15 yards as tried to reprise his earlier effort. Maclennan got a strong hand to it despite Crossley's acrobatic leap and attempted diversion. Still the ball was not clear, and Crossley tried another swipe whilst on the deck. Eventually, the United goal survived a further breach.

Shortly before the half time whistle, with Carloway well in control of proceedings, Gordon "Tago" MacDonald shot narrowly over from a good position.

Half-time: Carloway 3 United 0

Having managed to build a healthy lead in the first half with the wind advantage, and playing with purpose and confidence, it was so far so good for Na Gormaich. The question was would they go for more goals or adopt a slightly more cautious approach in the second 45 as United would be expected to see more of the ball. There was a feeling, just as there was on the previous Saturday, that while there was no need for all out attack one more goal should make the game safe.

Carloway were also forced into a change at the break. Eachainn Miller was clearly not 100% following the collision which led to the penalty award, and he was withdrawn. His place was taken by Kenny "Beag" Maclennan.

There was to be an early goal shortly after the restart, in the 52nd minute, which settled any doubts over the outcome of the match. Andrew "Tago" Maciver sent a beautiful diagonal from the midfield wide on the right towards his cousin Gordon "Tago" MacDonald, who was advancing up the inside left channel. Just inside the box and left of centre, MacDonald evaded his marker and showed great technique as he met it perfectly and guided the ball low across Maclennan and into the net just inside the keeper's left post with his trusty left foot for an excellent goal **(4-0)**.

On the hour, United created a chance of their own and Flower forced a save out of Craigie from a volley from an acute angle on the right 10 yards from goal. United never gave up and continued to try to take the game to the hosts. 17 year old Euan Macdonald, who had come on as a substitute for the injured Andrew Macleod in the first half, showed up particularly well against a more experienced Carloway midfield.

In the latter half hour of the match, Carloway introduced all the remaining substitutes into the fray, firstly starlet Callum “Beag” Mackay took over from Jordan Macleod. Still Carloway were creating openings. With his back to goal, Dan Crossley flicked overhead into the path of Gordon “Tago” MacDonald but he couldn’t quite gather as defenders Maciver and Macphee crowded him out. MacDonald was then replaced by Ben Smith in the wide left berth.

United really ought to have scored a late consolation goal but blazed over from a good central position. Sven Wiltshire and Stuart “Gochan” got a brief outing having come on for the final few minutes, before United’s Dempster had his name taken by the referee in the 87th minute when he hauled down Ben Smith as he ran on to a through ball 25 yards from goal. Though the resulting free kick was played short but came to nothing, Carloway saw out the match comfortably.

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

Carloway played some excellent passing football, particularly in the first half and will be pleased to follow up the victory on Saturday by registering another win tonight. They dominated possession, created more chances, and crucially took some of the opportunities created. The sharpness from the outset and the early three goal salvo provided the platform for success. The clean sheet was a welcome bonus too. United continue to improve and battled gamely until the final whistle.

The availability of Dan Crossley and Eachainn Miller in recent matches has provided the team with more pace, creativity and scoring power complementing a strong squad and has helped to mitigate the loss of other key players. Whilst Miller’s appearances for the remainder of this season are expected to be more sporadic due to his educational commitments, Crossley’s continued availability could be significant as the team continue to challenge for success in the league and cups.

News of Westside being held to a draw at Back tonight provided further cause for optimism for the management, players and supporters that there is still everything to play for. However, the enforced break in Lewis & Harris Football as the Island Games is being staged just as the team appears to be finding its rhythm and form may also have come at an inopportune time for Carloway.

We wish all the participants at the Island Games every success, and we look forward to all Carloway’s representatives returning from Gotland having enjoyed the event and fighting fit and ready for the second half of what promises to be an exciting season.

Carloway Man of the Match: Andrew “Tago” Maciver.

United Man of the Match: Euan Macdonald.