

Coop Cup Round 2:

## **Carloway 5 (3) Eriskay 2 (0)**

*Jordan Macleod 24 secs.*

*Ali Macdonald 71*

*Angus Grant 23, 48*

*Jordan Macpherson 90+2*

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver 44*

*Ben Smith 71*

*At Cnoc a' Choilich, Carloway.*

*Saturday, 15.7.17.*

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

*Carloway line judge: Calum "Cobby" Macleod*

*Eriskay line judge: Stephen MacDonald*

**CARLOWAY: 4-5-1.**

*Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.*

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

*Gordon "Van Der Sar" Craigie*

*Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Ali "Laxay" Macdonald Joe Armstrong*

*Jordan Macleod Dan Crossley Andrew "Tago" Maciver Callum "Beag" Mackay Gordon "Tago" Macdonald*

*Angus Grant*

*Subs. used: Ben Smith (Dan Crossley) 63; Sven Wiltshire (Gordon "Tago" Macdonald) 67;*

*Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald (Angus Grant) 71; Matthew Murray (Callum "Beag" Mackay) 78;*

*Andrew "Lanky" Macdonald (Joe Armstrong) 90.*

*Yellow cards: Gordon "Tago" Macdonald (serious foul play) 63; Andrew "Lanky" Macdonald (serious foul play) 90+1.*

**ERISKAY: 4-3-3**

*Manager: Martin "Cherry" Macaulay*

*11 Liam MacKinnon 15 Jordan MacKinnon 17 Calum MacMillan*

*8 Ali MacDonald 19 Callum Campbell 14 Seumas Jimmy Campbell*

*21 David MacIsaac 6 Roddy Paul MacDonald (capt.) 12 Jordan McPherson 7 Michael Iain MacInnes*

*1 Angus Carruthers*

*Sub. Not used: Stephen MacDonald*

A rather unprepossessing morning greeted the home side's honoured guests at Cnoc a' Choilich. If Wednesday night at Fivepenny could have passed for a lazy summer's evening in le Touquet-sur-Plage, this morning was a dead ringer for midwinter in Goose Bay, Labrador. Blanket cloud enveloped the landscape on all sides, unceasing rain only varied in its intensity, and a howler of a sou' easterly played tricks with the ball.

Most fans appeared to have chosen to stay home to watch Garbiñe Muguruza and Venus Williams on the TV. The journey north must have been a real joy for the guys in the Celtic strips. Wonder what it was like on the Sound of Harris? Ouch! Even worse they had to play into the unpredictable wind for the opening 45 minutes, then suffer the indignity of having any previously agreed game-plan immediately disappear like snow off a dyke, courtesy of Jordan Macleod.

A creditable 1-0 victory over Back at Lionacleit on 10th June, immediately

before Carloway's 8-2 mauling of Barra on the same ground, had brought them here, to continue hostilities against a side they had encountered three times before in recent years.

If we were to travel back down a time tunnel to May, 2004, to Daliburgh, we would see Nick "Nuck" Davis scoring twice and Gordon Craigie once to secure a 3-3 draw in a Coop Cup Round 1, only for Neil Bowman (married yesterday in Harris) to miss a vital penalty, and the Blues to crash out 4-5 in the shoot-out. Interestingly, Peter and Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald, Scott Macaulay, and Andrew "Tago" Maciver also featured that day, in what was Iain "Biodach" Mackay's last game for the club.

Four years ago Lionacleit was the venue but this time it was a romp in the sun for the Blues in Round 2 of the Coop, going nap with a 9-3 destruction of the Hoops, a game memorable for a five-goal masterclass from "Dokus" and the appearance on the team-sheet of an unused substitute, one Graeme "Windy" Miller. Ali MacDonald, performing today, and scoring, also featured on the score-sheet that day for the Éirisgich.

Two years ago at Lionacleit once more, in the Coop Cup Round 1, it was an altogether tighter affair, when a make-shift Blues' side with Murdo "Squegg" Macleod in central defence; a 4-man midfield of Mark Macleod, Kevin "Barra" Macneil, Ali "Laxay" Macdonald, and Joe Armstrong, and Gordon "Van Der Sar" Craigie at centre-forward, sacrificed a first-half Domhnall Mackay lead, before scoring twice in the last fifteen minutes through "Laxay" and Stuart "Gochan" Macleod. "Windy" was again a substitute, and was even yellow-carded.

However, there was no scratching around for volunteers today by na Gormaich, despite confirmation that young star, Eachainn Miller, had put pen to paper for Stirling University in the Lowland League and henceforth would be unavailable. Donald "D.I." MacIennan was still on the injured list and this, of course, entailed Domhnall Mackay remaining at centre-back, but Dan Crossley still started and, no doubt, was happy to see his ebullient midfield partner, Andrew "Tago" Maciver, back on duty, with Gordon "Tago" Macdonald also making an appearance on the left. Surprisingly, "Dokus" only made the bull-pen, but the versatile Ben Smith also graced the side-lines, among stars of the future, Sven Wiltshire, Matthew Murray, and Andrew "Lanky" Macdonald.

It was evident from the opening whistle that there were going to be three participants in this game: Carloway, Eriskay, and the wind. Whoever harnessed it, if indeed that was at all possible, would have a clear advantage. However, before such considerations were significant, we had what is now becoming a local tradition: an astonishing opening to the tie. From the kick-off Mackay won the ball in the centre, just inside his own half, then moved forward and quickly supplied Grant diagonally to his right. The ace hit-man did not hesitate and took off like an express train, trailing markers like a comet's tail. He made the bye-line before cutting back a perfect invitation to Macleod, 12 metres from goal in the centre. His instant connect might have

gone home alone but a nasty deflection off R. P. Mac.'s heel sent it flying inside the Eriskay left-hand post, giving Carruthers no chance (1-0).

Unfortunately, there is no exact time recorded for Murdo "Squegg" Macleod's gob-smacking 60-metre flier in that incredible game against Southend in Daliburgh in May, 2008, but Jordan's strike here must run it close for fastest ever Carloway goal. To their credit, the visitors did not buckle and drop but took the game to their hosts and should have done better with an excellent chance created in the ninth minute. Ali Macdonald won the ball midway within the Carloway half in the centre and moving rapidly forward, played a perfect Jimmy McIlroy from 20 metres inside Armstrong, wide of "Laxay", for S.J. Campbell to roar in unhindered on the advancing Craigie, but he opted for power rather than place and his rocket shot whacked off the keeper and off for a corner on the near-side.

A minute later the Blues tried to punish the Hoops for this near miss when a "Tago" corner on the Eriskay left was met by an unmarked Crossley right in the centre on the 6-metre line but its pace deceived the *trequantista* and his header flew straight up and over. After 15 minutes Callum "Beag" burst through the centre, and at the optimum moment slipped a perfect low diagonal forward to Grant, ghosting off Macpherson and into the box. From 16 metres his low right-footer struck the boot of the intercepting R.P., and spun high leftwards where a rushing Callum "Beag" just failed to get his head full-on to the difficult ball and his glance whizzed off for a goal-kick.

Then another let-off arrived for the Blues in 18 minutes when a MacPherson free-kick from just inside the Carloway half on the Eriskay right touch-line, led to an undignified stramash in the Blues' area, before being dug out straight by "Laxay". Ali MacDonald won it to the right on the edge of the area and roared forward to drive an early daisy-cutter across Craigie towards the far post, but na Gormaich's luck held as the ball smacked off "Van Der Sar's" right-hand post and was cleared.

Again, Carloway tried to establish clear light between the sides as Callum "Beag" broke down the left and, 24 metres from goal, sent the neatest of diagonal lobs inwards for the breaking Grant but it was just a couple of feet too far for the ace striker to reach in front of goal. However, a minute later Mackay once again moved diagonally rightwards into the Eriskay half, finding Crossley, who in turn found speed-merchant Macleod leaving Macisaac behind to make the bye-line. He then cut in, before cutting back to Grant in front of goal, to crack the ball home from 12 metres (2-0).

The tempo now slackened and it was the 33rd minute before the next opportunity arrived, this time at the other end, when Ali Mac. and S.J. combined to push the ball forward into the Carloway box. Mackinnon was blocked by "Laxay", but managed to slip the ball to his left to Macmillan, who instantly hit a crisp right-footer high to Craigie's right from 16 metres, but the old war-horse managed to block it to his right at full-stretch and send the ball for a corner.

Then, a minute before the interval, Eriskay suffered a further blow that they could well have done without at such a crucial time. A "Tago" corner came in dangerous and high just in front of goal, but MacPherson managed to head it straight out. "Pongo", in the holding midfielder spot just outside the area in the centre, met it perfectly with a thundering right-footer - quite a specialty of his - and the ball cracked off the underside of Carruthers' left-hand bar, down, and up into the roof of the net (**3-0**).

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

A gale-free Bovril and orange slices must have been welcome for both sides after this endurance test. On the face of it, Carloway were well in control, but must have rued missing out on several other gilt-edged chances which had arrived with regularity, while Eriskay could not allow themselves to dwell on what might have been, regarding S.J.'s chance in the 8th minute, Ali Mac's. in the 18th, and Mackinnon's in the 33rd.

Their response in adversity had been admirable but a failure to harness the advantage of the wind - if it really was an advantage - and that killer concession in the 44th minute from "Pongo" had most likely taken the tie beyond their reach. The positive for the Éirisgich was that they had looked quite capable of scoring; unfortunately for them, however, so did Carloway.

A quick goal was essential for the Southerners. And it nearly came right away, when Ali Mac. took advantage of a loose ball to make the right edge of the Carloway box and send a nasty, low drive deep to Craigie's left, but the keeper got down well to block, then grasp at the second attempt under pressure. However, a minute later the game moved further out of the Hoops' reach when Mackay and Crossley combined to send Macleod speeding forward down the Eriskay left. As Grant ghosted to Macpherson's left, behind Maclsaac, Macleod slipped the perfect pass through in front of him for Grant to send an instant low right-footer across Carruthers and inside the far post (**4-0**).

The Hoops had an opportunity to reply in the 57th minute when a Callum Campbell corner on their right dropped down in the centre, 12 metres from goal. The ball ricocheted square left to Mackay, who tried to hook it clear, but the ball flew back off his boot, hit him on the shoulder, cracked off the underside of the bar and out, and Ali Mac., following up, headed strongly into Craigie's arms from 12 metres. For some reason, an indirect free-kick was then awarded against the Blues' captain, 12 metres from goal, for "*an unintentional foul*"? Answers on a post-card, please. The Carloway area now resembled Sauchiehall Street on a Saturday night but the free-kick, driven goal-wards ferociously, simply rebounded off the out-charging bodies and was cleared.

In 59 minutes Mackay once more repulsed an attack and, moving into the centre circle, sent a glorious breaker over the back-line for Grant to out-run Maclsaac and race clear into the box. However, Carruthers was out like lightning to block him, one-on-one. "Tago", following up in the centre, cracked

it first-time from 20 metres but the ball swept low, a metre past Eriskay's right-hand post.

Midway through the half, Callum "Beag" again received the ball, this time on the left, from Armstrong, and moved forward rapidly to midway within the Hoops' half, before releasing a high diagonal into the box, but Grant's glancing header from around the penalty spot was a foot wide of Carruthers' left-hand post.

Three minutes later an unwelcome surprise arrived for the home boys when a loose ball was picked up by Ali Mac., just inside his own half. He immediately steamed forward and, as the Carloway midfield and defence retreated before him, made 22 metres from goal before cracking home a sizzling left-footer low into Craigie's right-hand corner (**4-1**).

Unfortunately, Eriskay had only one minute to celebrate before Carloway dropped more misery upon them. A Callum "Beag" corner came winging in high from the Eriskay left and was met by a strong header from Grant, 16 metres from goal by the far post. The ball was blocked on the 6-metre line in front of goal, where it was stabbed back at goal by Smith, rebounded out once more, and then was lifted high into the roof of net this time by Smith's boot (**5-1**).

As a contest the game was effectively over with only one more incident of note worth recording, although "Van Der Sar" probably wishes it wasn't. Deep in added-on time, a MacPherson free kick harnessed the wind high, and far downfield. The ball travelled the length of the field and came zooming in on the unfortunate Craigie like Donald Campbell's "Bluebird". The keeper, on his goal-line, put up his hands to block the incoming missile, but misjudged, and the ball shot rightwards off them and just about burst the right-hand side of his net (**5-2**). Of course, Mr. MacPherson meant to do this all along. What would that distance be? 60 metres? 70? One for the record books, perhaps.

**Full-time: Carloway 5 (3) Eriskay 2 (0)**

So, a welcome result in extremely challenging circumstances. There were similarities here to the Ness game on Wednesday, with Carloway aiming for, and achieving, that same structured cohesion with which they had largely controlled the Fivepenny League game, and then, whenever the opposition over-played themselves, threatened, or scored, bursting forward at high speed. This betrays a spreading confidence in the team, this knowingness mentioned before that they feel that simply by playing competently within their strengths, they are bound to win, like the Brazil of old whose attitude could be summed up as, *"Who cares how many the opposition scores? We'll simply score more!"*

Certainly, today there was always the feeling that Carloway would eventually triumph, although Eriskay must have considered themselves unlucky not to have pushed the home side more closely, when they thought of the early chances they squandered. Na Gormaich, in their turn, were extremely profligate and could and should have scored more, but with everyone up front

wanting a piece of the cake, as it were, others, in more favourable positions, did not always receive the pass they might have. But, who can complain? Six on Wednesday; five today? As long as someone scores. Keep them coming, especially in the two big ties this coming week.

**Carloway Man of the Match: Callum “Beag” Mackay.**

**Eriskay Man of the Match: Ali MacDonald.**