

Lewis and Harris League:

## **Stornoway Athletic 1 (0) Carloway 6 (2)**

*Jamie Fraser 57*

*Billy Anderson 34*

*Domhnall Mackay 41*

*Jordan Macleod 50, 80*

*Andrew "Tago" Maciver 73, 78*

*At Goathill Park, Stornoway.*

*Monday, 15.8.17, 1900.*

*Referee: Stuart Macleod (Shawbost)..*

*Athletic line judge: Calum "Chancey" Macleod.*

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

**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 Gordon "Tago" Macdonald*

*Jordan Macleod Andrew "Tago" Maciver Billy Anderson Dan Crossley Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald*

*Kevin "Gochan" Macleod ■*

*Subs. used: Sven Wiltshire (Billy Anderson) 77; Matthew Murray (Kevin "Gochan" Macleod) 81; Andrew Macleod (Jordan Macleod) 81; Andrew "Lanky" Macdonald (Gordon "Tago" Macdonald) 88.*

*Subs. not used: Euan Gilmour.*

*Yellow card: Kevin "Gochan" Macleod (dissent) 77.*

**ATHLETIC:** 4-5-1

*Manager: Magnus Johnson.*

*Connor Maciver*

*Jamie Fraser Colin "Titch" Macritchie Scott "Flapjack" Macaulay Kieran Bell Stuart "Bubble" MacDonald*

*Scott Morgan Ali "Koch" Morrison Lewis Macdonald ■ Calum Masson Murdo "Marags" Maciver*

*Sub. used: Mo Khalil (Scott Morgan) 62; no. 14 (Connor Maciver) 76.*

*Sub. not used: Craig Macleod.*

*Yellow card: Lewis Macdonald (serious foul play) 76*

It's been an unusual season for Carlway: the Championship and EaF are already won, yet their penultimate League match of 2017 was only their second visit of the year to the premier football ground on the island. Early elimination from both the ABC and Jock Stein Cups to what seemed at one point the team destined to dominate the season, Westside, meant no early Finals here. So their first visit was on the occasion of the disappointing Round 1 defeat, 1-2, to tonight's opponents in the Moldova Lewis Cup. That night, a dire first-half performance had led into a battling second 45-minute display from the Blues which might have produced several goals but the ball simply would not run for our heroes, and though "Fraser "Frazmac" Macleod restored parity late, a Connor Macliver penalty conversion in the 92nd minute eliminated na Gormaich.

In the sides' only previous other meeting this season, at the end of May, Carloway had overcome an early set-back to lead 2-1 at half-time, before an aggressive Athletic stormed back into the lead with 20 minutes to go and it took an Andrew "Tago" Maciver header in the final minute to save a point for the home side. This meant, of course, that the Stornoway side were the only Lewis and Harris side unbeaten by Carloway this season.

Unfortunately, the machine did not arrive here tonight in the best of condition, due to multiple absences from the normal first XI. Donald "D.I." MacIennan was suspended, while work commitments ruled out Joe Armstrong. This necessitated Domhnall Mackay dropping back to partner Ali "Laxay" Macdonald in central defence while a surprising move saw Gordon "Tago" Macdonald coming in on the left of the line. Billy Anderson was a welcome replacement for Mackay in the centre of midfield, while Gordon "Van Der Sar" Craigie replaced the unavailable David Beaton in goal; Callum "Beag" Mackay was also unable to attend while Angus Grant had returned to Aberdeen, though it was uncertain if this was permanent. Kevin "Gochan" Macleod was given the striker's role, Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald stayed on the left half/wing position, and Jordan Macleod was happy to re-enter the fray on the right-hand side. The average age of the side looked roughly double that of the side who took the field at Garrabost last Friday night, although, fortunately, the manager did not have to call up Captain Mainwaring and Private Pike to grace the substitutes' bench.

A mild evening with only the lightest of sou' easterlies brought the midges out in force because of the light trace of dampness from earlier in the day. A sparse crowd illustrated quite starkly that as far as the punters were concerned, the League finished last Monday and the Blues' last two League fixtures, both at Goathill, only had prestige value and could even be used as bounce games to give squad players a run-out. After all, the fans don't really know what qualities the young players on the bench, week in, week out, possess, young men like Sven Wiltshire, Matthew Murray, Andrew Macleod, Andrew "Lanky" Macdonald, Stuart "Gochan" Macleod, and Euan Gilmour. A selection was available in the bull-pen tonight for bleeding.

An unattractive opening half-hour of broken play, lost possession, and long balls - from both sides - demonstrated quite clearly the struggle the Blues were having to apply cohesion and momentum to an unfamiliar line-up. In the opening three minutes Mackay did manage to clear forward to "Pongo" on the centre line and he immediately swept the ball forward right to Macleod who wall-passed back to the charging midfielder but his right-foot strike from 20 metres cleared the bar by a couple of metres. It was the nineteenth minute before another opportunity arrived, when a "Dokus" free-kick, midway within the Athletic half, out towards the left touch-line, was played inwards to Crossley, on the left corner of the box. He stepped right of "Flapjack" but his whipped-round right-foot daisy-cutter went straight to "Marags".

Three minutes later the Hoops finally managed to make an impression in attack. "Koch" cleared the ball forward from his box and "Titch" gathered the ball on the right centre-line, dummied Anderson inwards and found Maciver,

facing him in the centre, 22 metres from goal. However, his neat shuffle and turn to his right only forced Craigie to scamper to his right to hold low down.

In 26 minutes the Carloway machine began at last to show signs of revving up and moving into fourth gear. A Macritchie cross from the right into the centre of the Blues' area was headed out strongly by Mackay, straight down the middle to Andrew "Tago", on the centre line. He flashed an immediate early ball to "Gochan", facing him midway within the Aths' half, and he instantly flicked the ball right to the breaking Crossley. "Raymondo" left "Bubble" and Morgan grappling with air as he did a Gianni Rivera to the near corner of the box, but his rocket flew a metre over "Marags's" left-hand bar.

The game was finally hotting up. In 29 minutes a "Titch" free-kick, 20 metres from goal on the left corner of the Carloway box, disappeared a couple of metres over "Van Der Sar's" left-hand bar. Na Gormaich replied with a Gordon "Tago" corner on the Carloway right which was met strongly by "Gochan" on the penalty spot, but it flew well-wide of Aths' left-hand post.

But then, in 34 minutes, the best move of the game delivered the opener. Jamie Fraser, anonymous till then, tried to force his way forward into the left of the box, but the towering bulk of Mackay flattened him and shot the ball forward to Crossley, moving rightwards along the centre line and he immediately played the ball right to "Tiger", charging down the line like Dani Alves. He looked up, then fired the ball forward to Jordan Macleod, moving rapidly to 20 metres from the bye-line. The young star did not hesitate and sent a low squared ball inwards towards Anderson who connected first-time and sent a curling, low right-footer across the area and just inside the diving keeper's right-hand post (**0-1**). An absolute peach of a move and finish!

This initiated an extended period of pressure, as na Gormaich scented further blood. "Titch" lost the ball in midfield and Crossley steamed off through two markers from the centre line, before cracking in a high right-foot drive from the edge of the box, which "Marags" did well to beat away to his right. "Gochan" gave chase to the left and played the ball back to "Dokus" on the near corner of the box. His low left-footer was too hot for the keeper to hold, low to his left, and "Koch" was forced to boot the ball towards Engebret's. In 39 minutes a "Dokus" corner from the Blues' left was bundled out in the centre and Anderson and Crossley combined to win the ball midway within Aths' half and play the ball forward to Gordon "Tago" on the penalty spot. He immediately spun round to his left but his low right-footer was a couple of feet outside Aths' left-hand post.

Moments later, yet another "Dokus" free-kick on the Blues' left, 22 metres from the bye-line, led to a scramble, ten feet out in front of goal. Two attempted conversions were blocked and clearances charged down, before the ball reached Mackay, 12 metres out to the right of goal, and he somehow managed to grind a low right-footer under Morgan to Maciver's left and home (**0-2**).

**Half-time: Stornoway Athletic 0 Carloway 2**

Once again, Carloway confused their supporters - and probably themselves - subjecting them to a head-shaking, nail-biting 30 minutes, before metamorphosing in an instant from lounge lizard into lion rampant and leaving opposing defenders clutching at thin air. The final quarter-hour had been electric, despite the unwelcome choices the management had had to make.

The Hoops tried to claw their way back immediately with neat interplay between Bell and Maciver on the right, midway within the Blues' half, sending the young striker forward to deliver a nasty, swinging cross, square across the line of the Carloway box. However, it reached the waiting Macritchie at an awkward height and when he dived low towards it, his header ended up going well-wide of Craigie's left-hand post.

Immediately na Gormaich came forward again, Mackay sending the ball straight to Anderson, on the centre line. The ace *animateur* looked up, then sent a glorious Charlie Gallagher behind Morgan for Macleod to break at pace down the right touch-line. Twenty metres from the bye-line he sent over a high, diagonal right-foot cross, which was caught by the wind as it approached goal, just enough to fool "Marags", by the near post, carry on, then drop neatly inside the far post (**0-3**).

Na Gormaich now quite clearly sank back, inviting Athletic to come at them, but then, in 55 minutes, they performed a characteristic surge forward, when the ball broke out of defence to "Gochan", lurking midway within his own half, on the right. The mercurial live-wire took off like a Shanghai Maglev, trailing defenders like a comet's tail the length of the park to the edge of the Aths' box, before slipping the ball square inwards to the arriving "Dokus". However, it was a shade too far for the hit-man and his sliding attempt at a right-footer went straight to the keeper.

Two minutes later a life-line appeared for the Hoops, when a breaking ball came out of the Blues' box to Fraser, 22 metres from goal on the left. He tried to force his way to the left of Mackay, the ball broke loose, then back off Mackay; the wing-man persisted, it broke onwards, and he followed up to ram a straight-footer from 12 metres past the advancing keeper's right (**1-3**).

Immediately, the home side went for broke, with the dangerous Mo Khalil replacing Morgan but even the Enzo Francescoli antics of Khalil couldn't unlock a way through and in 66 minutes na Gormaich burst forward once more as "Laxay" won the ball in his own box and moved forward, then found Crossley. Crossley raced from his own half on the left, wall-passed with "Laxay", now on his left, then reached the left corner of the Hoops' box, before rolling a perfect low ball in to Anderson. But his right-foot strike was a metre too high. Five minutes later another burst saw Mackay play forward to "Gochan" on the centre-line and he played the ball square outwards to Gordon "Tago" racing down the line. As Masson (?) came to challenge, the wing-man slipped a low squared ball to "Dokus", on the opposition penalty spot. He performed his characteristic one step to the side, this time to the left, before whipping round with a left-foot daisy-cutter which just crept outside

"Marags's" left-hand post.

Two minutes later the sun really fell out of the heavens for the Stornoway men, as Anderson found Gordon "Tago" on his left, moving leftwards out of the centre circle, and he in turn supplied the ball forward to Andrew "Tago", midway within the opposition half. He stormed straight forward through a defence that parted like the Red Sea before him and from just inside the box unleashed a thumping drive left of "Marags" and into the roof of the net (1-4).

A tired-looking Carloway were suddenly re-energized and came forward again in a lightning break down the left through Crossley. He found Wiltshire moving into the left of the Aths' box and slipped a low squared ball to Macleod, 12 metres out in the centre. As defenders converged, the young star back-heeled the ball straight onwards to Andrew "Tago" behind him, and "Pongo" gratefully accepted the gift by sweeping a left-footer home into Aths' left-hand corner (1-5).

As the home side totally lost focus, a sixth arrived in the 80th minute when Crossley sent "Dokus" clear down the left behind his marker. As he moved into the left of the box, he drew "Marags" before dispatching the ball inwards to the arriving Macleod and he whacked a low right-footer from 16 metres off the bottom of Aths' right-hand post and home (1-6).

**Full-time: Stornoway Athletic 1 (0) Carloway 6 (2)**

A strange beast this Carloway side. At times, Yamamoto's famous quote seems apt: don't "*awaken a sleeping giant*" as you might "*fill him with a terrible resolve*". In the last few games, there have been long periods in which a turgid *longueur* has seemed to possess the Blues. Then something occurs: an opponent scores; a piece of individual brilliance opens up possibilities, whatever - and it is as if the machine has had an oil change, has been recalibrated, and the machine rises from the dead like Lazarus and propels itself forward in strength.

For the first half-hour tonight Carloway struggled in their new line-up, trying to establish a coherent tactical structure: at the back "Laxay" lacked his usual sure touch, clearly missing his fellow stopper, "D.I.", with Mackay and Gordon "Tago" lying further forward than Macleod and Armstrong would and placing a strain on his ability to cover; As "Tago" came forward, "Dokus" tended to move in and forward, crowding a midfield which still operated individually, leaving "Gochan", the lone striker, unsure where to lie or how far forward to go.

Then the Macleod/Anderson cracker arrived, and suddenly it was Real Madrid at Goathill we were watching. Macleod's first goal came early in the second half, and this seemed to encourage Carloway to regress to their opening level, before "Andrew "Tago's" thumper re-incarnated the "*Galacticos*" impersonation once more in Stornoway.

Watching the period from the 73rd to the 80th minute seemed like viewing a **Match of the Day "Best Goals of the Season"** recap. An astonishing

performance, even more so considering the choices “Windy” had to deal with. David, Joe, Callum “Beag”, Angus, and “D.I.” better watch out - we might not need them!

**Stornoway Athletic Man of the Match: Colin “Titch” Macritchie.**

**Carloway Man of the Match: Jordan Macleod.**