

Jock Stein Cup Round 1:

Stornoway United 0 (0) Carloway 2 (0)

Neil Sinclair 71

Callum Masson 77

At Goathill Park, Stornoway

Wednesday, 16th May 2018, 19:00

Referee: Calum "Chancey" Macleod

Carlway line judge: Jim Crossley

United line judge: Iain Morrison

CARLOWAY: 4-5-1.

Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.

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

Gordon "Van Der Sar" Craigie

Callum "Beag" Mackay Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur Donald "D.I." Maclelland Joe Armstrong

Callum Masson Stuart "Bubble" MacDonald Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Murdo "Squegg" Macleod

Archie MacDonald

Neil Sinclair

Subs. used: Andy "Bernera" Morrison (Murdo "Squegg" Macleod) 36; Billy Anderson (Donald "D.I." Maclelland) 78; Andrew "Lanky" MacDonald (Joe Armstrong) 86; Ben Smith (Callum Masson) 86.

Subs. not used: None.

Yellow cards: None.

UNITED: 4-4-2

Manager: Steven Munro

Alfie Macmillan Hamish MacDonald (capt.)

Calum Iain "Kalou" Macdonald Kenny Macsween Coinneach Smith Euan Macdonald

Andrew Macleod Kevin Flower Eoin MacPhee Scott Macrae

Jack Maclelland

Subs. : Scott Montgomery (Scott Macrae) 45; Finlay Macsween (Andrew Macleod) 53; ? (Calum Iain "Kalou" Macdonald) 84; David Allan Macmillan (Alfie Macmillan) 86.

Yellow cards: Scott Montgomery 60; Euan Macdonald 61.

Red cards: Euan Macdonald 79

Yet another cup tonight, and another chance to decorate the gantry of the Doune Braes bar. Hopefully, the Blues would leave the home of football with something to celebrate over their Americanos in the local Starbucks, having progressed into a Semi-Final to face Ness at Fivepenny.

Carlway have only experienced the joy of lifting this trophy once, back in 2013, when they defeated local rivals, Westside, 3-0, thanks to a second-half hat-trick from "Frazmac", although Iain Mackay's superb penalty save from Colin George Morrison at 2-0 must not be forgotten. Since then, the Blues' JS track record has not exactly been stellar. The following two seasons saw successive Round 1 defeats at Leurbost, 1-3 and 0-1, though in 2016 they did overcome Back 4-3 before falling to a 2-3 penalty shoot-out defeat in the semi-finals at Garrabost after a 2-2 draw over

120 minutes. Last season, of course, a 0-3 home defeat in Round 1 formed part of the trilogy of thumpings endured by our heroes against the Siarachs in the opening part of the season.

The early elimination of both of tonight's sides from most domestic cups last year meant the two sides tonight only met twice in Season 2017. In mid-June three goals in the opening 15 minutes from Andrew "Tago" Maciver, Domhnall Mackay from the penalty spot, and Eachainn Miller nullified any United threat early, and Gordon "Tago" Macdonald added a fourth shortly after half-time. The return, in late August, was an altogether different affair in what was na Gormaich's final League game of 2017. The Blues - already crowned Champions - seemed to have half their thoughts elsewhere, probably on their upcoming Coop Cup Final in a fortnight against Westside, as Kenneth Macsween stunned them with an opener in 95 seconds. As Carloway struggled to focus, a low right-foot rocket from Hamish Macdonald in 41 minutes seemed to be sending the Blues to their first League defeat since late April. However, in a stunning four-minute spell, the Blues stormed back through Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald and "Pongo", before a second "Pongo" strike after the interval took them to victory.

So, to tonight: as expected, Gordon "Van Der Sar" Craigie replaced David Beaton and Dan Crossley did not feature. Ross Maciver was also unavailable, so "Windy" rejigged the system: Archie MacDonald moved out of central defence to a more usual left midfield role and Callum "Beag" Mackay came in behind him. Thus the 4-5-1 formation seemed to be retained with "Beag"/"Tiger"/"D.I.)/Armstrong as Domhnall Mackay performed in central midfield. Callum Masson appeared to be lying deeper, which reduced the attack threat. Over the winter the hosts had lost Kyle Munro, while Chris Dempster had decided to take a year's sabbatical. However, Alfie Macmillan had signed from Point, and Hugh Mackenzie, Scott Macrae and Coinneach Smith enlisted. Having taken over from Grant Hunter in recent days, this match was Steven Munro's first in charge of the team as manager.

Despite the fair, windless conditions, the fans seemed to have opted to watch Athletic Madrid v. Marseille in Lyon instead of the local fare as Goathill was practically empty. Nevertheless, the Blues immediately took the fight to the Wasps. Whether through pressure or design, the home side had to endure most of the opening 45 minutes penned back deep within their home half, with most of the action taking place between the centre line and midway within their half. After 4 minutes a Sinclair free-kick, 20 metres from goal in the centre, hit the wall but moments later a Mackay feeder from the centre circle allowed Sinclair to race towards the right edge of the United box. However, his low daisy-cutter sped a metre outside Maclennan's left-hand post. Four minutes later an Armstrong/"Bubble" one-two freed Armstrong down the left; 16 metres from the line, just outside the box, he squared low to the arriving Sinclair by the near post. The striker had time to turn the ball straight back to "Bubble" on the edge of the box but his quick-fire, low drive went straight to the keeper.

After 15 minutes Sinclair managed to rob Macdonald in the centre circle, then supply

Archie MacDonald moving forward at speed to his left. MacIennan was out smartly at his feet as he raced into the box but the ball broke forward to the keeper's left. The Uibhisteach tried to back-heel the breaking ball to Sinclair, in support behind him, but the stranded keeper recovered smartly and dived on the ball gratefully.

In 20 minutes Mackay, on the left centre line, sent MacDonald down the left towards the bye-line. Sixteen metres from the line he cut a low ball back to Sinclair in the centre but his snap attempt rebounded back and rightwards to Masson. However, his instant pop-shot from 16 metres cleared the bar by a metre. In 26 minutes yet another surge through the centre saw Mackay play forward from the centre circle to Sinclair, 22 metres from goal, facing him. His right-foot flick spun behind him in front of "Bubble", surging into the box, but his first-time stab went a metre outside MacIennan's right-hand post.

On the half-hour "Bubble" won the ball in the centre and supplied MacDonald, moving forward on his left. Sixteen metres from the bye-line he cut the ball in square, but it broke out to the following "Bubble" on the edge of the left box and he immediately thwacked a fierce right-foot drive goalwards. However, MacIennan got down brilliantly to his left to beat the ball way for a corner. Three minutes later a MacDonald corner on the left came in low to the near post. The covering MacPhee tried to boot clear but sliced badly and the ball spun high in the air and back over his head to cause a scramble directly in front of goal. Unfortunately, all Sinclair had room to do in the general melée was flick the ball high goal-wards and the keeper managed to palm it down under his bar, then drop on the ball.

Half-time: Stornoway United 0 Carloway 0

In terms of territory and possession, Carloway had dominated, maybe 65% to 35%, but difficult, uncompromising opponents had denied them any golden opportunities to lead, and half-chances were useless against a keeper of MacIennan's quality. Hard work and hard running was not providing the opportunities and the absence of Crossley, the saving of Anderson to late in games, then the forced substitution of "Squegg" early reduced the creative element necessary to break down a combative foe.

The opening twenty minutes of the second half suggested that the evening might become even more unpleasant for na Gormaich as United suddenly became much more assertive. In 53 minutes a surge down their left saw Andy Macleod find "Kalou" 20 metres in front of him and his early forward ball straight forward allowed Macmillan, on the left of the Carloway box, to fire in a nasty low drive from 20 metres which Craigie was forced to beat out again, away to his right.

Two minutes later "D.I." and Mackay combined to break down a United attack on the edge of their box and the latter played forward wide to "Bubble", on the left touch-line, and he immediately took off on a surging run which took him the length of the park to the opposition bye-line. Somehow he tricked his way in through a defender along the line before cutting the ball back to Sinclair, 16 metres out by the near post, but his attempted left-foot conversion was mishit and bounced awkwardly up and

across the United goal before being scrambled away off the line at the base of the far post.

Finally, in 70 minutes, Carloway got the break-through that their pressure had promised for so long. A United attack was broken up on the edge of the Carloway box by "D.I." and he forced the ball straight forward to "Bubble", who rode off a tackle coming forward and supplied Sinclair, 10 metres inside the Wasps' half. He, in turn, had to hold off a defender's heavy attention to turn and run in unhindered on goal. As Maclennan approached, the striker took his time before stroking a low, fierce right-footer from 20 metres well-wide of Maclennan's diving body and just inside his right-hand post (**0-1**).

Hardly had the Blues finished congratulating themselves than their opponents missed a golden opportunity to draw level. As Carloway cleared up a United attack, the ball was played back to "Van Der Sar", but his kick-out was weak and arrived at the feet of Hamish MacDonald, 22 metres from goal on the right. He immediately sent the most beautiful Martin Peters curling over the Carloway back-line to the back post, which "D.I." was unable to reach. Montgomery glided in, unmarked, 12 metres from the back post, but he somehow managed to send his header a foot over Craigie's right-hand bar.

It was costly, as three minutes later na Gormaich sealed up the victory, thanks to a glorious piece of opportunism from ace-goal getter, Calum Masson. Again, Mackay won the ball in his own half and moved forward, seeking to free Masson through the centre. His first pass forward was blocked but as the ball came back to him, he found Masson on the edge of the box, and without hesitation, the hit-man whacked a cracking right-footer, low past Maclennan's left (**0-2**).

Moments later United were reduced to ten men and from then on the game appeared to be trundling to a predictable close when United were suddenly handed the chance of a consolation in the 89th minute. Once again a pass-back arrived at Craigie's feet, in a busy penalty area, but instead of humphing it downfield, for some curious reason "Van Der Sar" stabbed it straight forward to clear. Unfortunately, No. 15 was standing there, 12 metres from goal, but the sudden opportunity for glory must have surprised him as he snatched at it and the ball went straight up, hit the top of the bar, and headed off to Springfield Road.

Full-time: Stornoway United 0 (0) Carloway 2 (0)

Last season's display by the Blues was described as "*a victory achieved mainly through sweat, commitment, and industry.*" The game was also said to feature "*sudden inspired blasts of imagination and creativity of Crossley and Anderson which presented multiple opportunities*". Unfortunately, tonight's display featured the former, but not the latter. It also featured a United performance which also contained "*sweat, commitment, and industry*", but, luckily, for na Gormaich, until they received those two late "*invitations*" from Carloway, the Stornoway boys rarely threatened. Indeed, it's difficult to remember Hamish Macdonald even having a shot at goal.

However, their heavy back-line, resolute marking, tackling, and blocking effectively kept the Blues at a distance from Maclennan, and both goals were results of individual perseverance and isolated expertise, rather than any defence-shredding moves. Overall, the Carloway machine didn't function that smoothly tonight, but smoothly enough to prevail over an unthreatening opposition. The main problem, again, seemed to be building the moves to support the strike team as they strove to get into scoring situations more frequently, then supply them with appropriate ammunition to fire.

Stornoway United Man of the Match: Jack Maclennan.

Carloway Man of the Match: Stuart "Bubble" Macdonald.