

Coop Cup Round 1:

Carloway 5 (1) South End 2 (0)

Callum Masson 29

Shaun MacCormick 50, 70

Neil Sinclair 47, 83

Andy "Bernera" Morrison 48

Fraser Macleod 87

At Cnoc a' Choilich.

Saturday, 19.5.18. 12.15.

Referee: Calum "Chancey" Macleod.

Far-side line judge: Jim Crossley.

Stand-side line judge: Angus "Dee" Macarthur.

CARLOWAY: 4-5-1.

Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.

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

Callum "Fluffy" Maclean

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

Callum Masson Stuart "Bubble" Macdonald Domhnall Mackay (capt.) Neil Sinclair Andy

"Bernera" Morrison ■

Fraser Macleod

Subs. used: Murdo "Sguegg" Macleod (Callum Masson) 81; Calum "Killer" Mackay (Donald "D.I." MacIennan) 88; Andrew "Lanky" Macdonald (Joe Armstrong) 90; Matthew Murray (Andy "Bernera" Morrison) 90.

Yellow card: Andy "Bernera" Morrison (professional foul) 59.

SOUTH END: 4-4-2

Manager: D. A. Lindsay.

John MacDonald Marco MacDonald

Crisdean Campbell Shaun MacCormick Eddie Fitzgibbon ■ Jamie Macaulay

Kevin Morrison Duncan MacQuarrie (capt.) Alasdair Steele Roddie Steele

Andy "Gress" Macleod

Subs. used: Cailleán Martindale (Crisdean Campbell) 68; Michael Steele (Kevin Morrison) 87.

Subs. not used: Allan MacInnes; Davey MacKenzie.

Yellow card: Eddie Fitzgibbon (serious foul play) 75

Once again Carloway had the mixed blessing of welcoming old foes, South End F.C.C., to Cnoc a' Choilich. The two adversaries enjoy inflicting maximum pain on each other whenever possible, in a blow-for-blow record stretching back to 2006. Both sides, however, do not travel well, performing best on home territory. Those of the Blues who took part in the 4-7 Coop Cup thrashing in Daliburgh in May 2008 probably still wake up during the night screaming. A year later the Blues were obliged to return, in the HAC Round 1, and a disputed late goal from Josie Campbell saw our heroes again lose out, 2-3, despite a reasonable second-half display.

Meeting the Deasachs at home has been slightly more rewarding. Their first encounter, in April 2006, saw na Gormaich edge a closely fought HAC Round 2 tie, 2-1, over the then reigning Uist and Barra Champions. Two years later, in early May, 2008, in Round 1 of the same cup, the Blues ran riot in the second half, scoring five goals without reply after a goal-less first half. In the 2014 Coop Cup Round 2 the visitors were unable to field a team, but in the same round of that Cup in May three

years ago, Carloway ran out 6-3 victors here, despite having to field a seriously weakened team, the high points for the Blues being a Lee Johnson hat-trick and a 4-goals-in-six-minutes burst in the second half. Last year, in the Semi-Final of this Cup, Carloway appeared to be in easy street with a 2-0 interval lead, before being ground to powder by a rampant Uist side in the second half, who scored once, hit the post once, the bar twice, and were denied by a stunning "Van Der Sar" save off the last kick of the game. Even Lev Yashin wouldn't have got that one!

So, to today: facing a side from the Southern Isles is always tricky. Apart from knowing the Deasachs were lying second in the Uist & Barra League, nothing was really known about their quality, though there was a familiar face between the sticks in Andy "Gress" Macleod. Carloway themselves had problems in that area, with both David Beaton and Craigie unavailable, so Callum "Fluffy" Maclean was handed his debut and deputized. Archie MacDonald and Ross Maciver were also unable to play and Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald was still unfit, while Murdo Squegg" Macleod, who at the season's opening wished to drop out of regular first-time action and only help out when required, was due a rest. "Windy" hadn't his selection problems to seek then, but he managed to square the circle, helped in part by the return up front of one of the 2013 *galacticos*, Fraser "Frazmac" Macleod. Andy "Bernera" Morrison filled the space on left midfield, while Matthew Murray and Calum "Killer" Mackay joined Andrew "Lanky" Macdonald and "Squegg" on the bench.

Again, a rather sparse crowd (apparently there were two or three big events taking place elsewhere in Scotland and England today) had to witness two sides desperately trying to utilize a gale-force sou' easterly, with and against them. Immediately, Carloway tried to pick up where they left off on Wednesday, with an aggressive high-line trying to use Masson's and "Frazmac's" pace wide and Sinclair's aggression through the centre, but the strong-looking Uibhistich did not buckle and it was the 11th minute before the first chance appeared. A "Bubble" charge from just inside his own half in the centre took him to midway within the South End half, before slipping a low diagonal right-wards to a breaking Sinclair, moving behind his marker. The Barach made 16 metres from the bye-line, just outside the box, before squaring across goal, but unfortunately his low cross was a couple of metres too far for Masson and "Frazmac" to connect.

It was 19 minutes before the Deasachs threatened. A perfect free-kick from Kevin Morrison in the centre circle was chested down well by John MacDonald on the penalty spot, before turning right, but his strike was blocked away for a corner by "D.I.". However, offside had already been given. Five minutes later a disputed free-kick on the right edge of the Carloway box was cracked viciously round the wall by McCormick but just swished outside "Fluffy's" right-hand post.

Then, in 29 minutes, the Blues finally used the wind to their advantage and started to breathe a little easier. A breaking ball was won by Mackay within the centre of his own half and he immediately transferred it forward to Sinclair. Midway within the South End half, he slipped the ball right-wards to the lurking Masson, who turned, steadied himself, then unleashed a high right-footer goal-wards which was caught by the wind and soared high over the flailing right-hand of "Gress" and into the top right of his net (**1-0**).

This steadied the Blues but the next real chance fell to the visitors in the 38th minute, when a Roddie Steele free-kick from the left-hand corner of the Carloway box led to a fracas within the Carloway box. First John MacDonald was charged down, then a shot from Marco MacDonald before the ball was booted off for a corner on the Carloway left by a relieved Armstrong.

Four minutes later it was "Frazmac's" chance to shine with a lightning-fast run the length of the right touch-line, before cutting the ball in square, 18 metres from the byeline, for a waiting Masson, but his immediate right-foot strike was beaten away expertly by "Gress", low to his left.

Half-time: Carloway 1 South End 0

Despite the wind making it difficult for both sides to be measured and constructive, the game had a reasonably entertaining "*cup-tie*" feel to it - physical; combative - and still hung in the balance as each side wanted the ball, to create the breaks that would realize the opportunities. An explosive opening four minutes in the second half heightened the temperature even further. Straight away the Uibhistich broke down the right, MacQuarrie finding Roddie Steele on the right on the centre-line, and he played the ball on early to John MacDonald, breaking behind Armstrong. From 20 metres on the left edge of the Carloway box, he let fly with a low right-foot curler which "Fluffy" had to look smart to turn away for a corner at the base of his left-hand post. The corner was headed clear and Mackay immediately picked out "Frazmac", lurking by the right touch-line on the centre line. He in turn whizzed off down the line like Usain Bolt towards the corner flag, pursued desperately by Morrison, who managed to tangle with him by the corner flag, but the big striker still managed to whip across a nasty waist-high ball to the near post. Masson tried to connect, but without success, the ball carrying onwards across goal, where Sinclair met it, 12 metres out by the near post, and drove it hard goal-wards. The ball took a nasty deflection off MacQuarrie, then a second off Steele, before shooting home just inside "Gress's" left-hand post (**2-0**).

A minute later, South End surged forward from the kick-off and once again the ball was lost, then played out to "Frazmac" on the right, and again he took off like Lewis Hamilton. This time he did not hesitate in the corner, but 16 metres from the bye-line hooked across a chest-high square ball which reached "Bernera" running across the box in the centre. He breasted the ball right-wards before whamming a reverse right-footer into the net to the right of the helpless keeper (**3-0**).

The drama did not cease. From the re-start, the Deasachs once more played forward, Fitzgibbon eventually freeing MacCormick coming through the centre. As the defence retreated, he looked up and from 22 metres cracked a high right-footer goal-wards, and just as Masson's effort had been helped on by the wind, so was this attempt, and the ball rocketed past the up-stretched right-hand of the keeper (**3-1**).

South End now found new energy - and purpose - to pressure an unsettled Carloway but it was 65 minutes before they created another opportunity. A long Morrison free-kick from midway within the Uibhisteach half, on the left, seemed to be flying well-wide of "Fluffy's" left-hand post as Roddie Steele gave chase, but 16 metres out from goal, almost on the bye-line, he somehow hooked the ball right-

wards across goal, though unfortunately, it travelled well past the far post.

Then, in 70 minutes, it was game-on: a disputed free-kick on the edge of the Blues' box, slightly to the left, was curved ever so neatly by MacCormick round the left end of the wall, and just inside "Fluffy's" left-hand post (**3-2**).

All to play for, all of a sudden, and Carloway realized they might have to win the game all over again. However, it was the 83rd minute before the dangerously see-sawing game fell the home side's way. A "Squegg" free-kick, 12 metres in from the bye-line on the South End left, and 18 metres from goal, was lifted neatly, square across goal. It cleared the central ruck and reached the unmarked Sinclair by the far post. Twelve metres out, he immediately whacked the ball with his right foot, slightly mishitting it into the ground, but it still trundled home, just inside "Gress's" right-hand post (**4-2**).

Four minutes later, the contest was effectively over, thanks to a typically explosive contribution from "Frazmac". When the ball was cleared forward to Sinclair by Mackay, he instantly turned and played on right-wards to Macleod, moving towards the right of the Deasach box. Before he could be challenged, he suddenly swung round on the edge of the box to blast a right-foot rocket which passed "Gress's" right side faster than Voyager 2 to twang the back of the net back and forth like Windfinder's Echo (**5-2**).

Full-time: Carloway 5 (1) South End 2 (0)

As is becoming increasingly common on the isles, there were three participants here: Carloway, South End, and the wind. Whoever coped better with that constant sou'easterly definitely had an advantage, and it certainly assisted in the scoring of each team's first goal. Carloway approached this game in a matter-of-fact, "*another day at the office*" style, forcing the play, being patient, and being careful at the back, and the only time they seemed slightly off-kilter was when South End registered their second goal and the visitors attempted to up the pace.

The Deasachs were a doughty, combative side who had to be treated with respect, being especially dangerous on either flank, through the skill of Shaun MacCormick on the left or pace of Roddie Steele on the right, but, thankfully, "Tiger", "D.I.", and Armstrong were on the mark, and the pace of Callum "Beag", Masson, and "Frazmac" tended to keep the opposition midfield and back-line deep. The presence of "Frazmac", and not least his pace and fire-power, lightened the load on Neil Sinclair, who had one of his most effective performances since his arrival - or maybe he had a special score to settle with the Deasachs. Who knows? Anyway, it was a fiercely-fought contest between evenly matched competitors, which could have gone either way up until the final twenty minutes.

Carloway Man of the Match: Joe Armstrong.

South End Man of the Match: Shaun MacCormick.