

Lewis and Harris League:

## **Back 3 (0)**

Gordon "Gordie" Maciver 60; 83; 90+1.

## **Carloway 2 (2)**

Craig Macleod o.g. 10

Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald 40 (pen.)

Friday, 8.6.18.

At Col Uarach, Coll.

Ref.: Andrew Macaulay.

Carloway line judge: Jim Crossley.

Back Line Judge: Alasdair "Red" Mackenzie

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

Manager: Graeme "Windy" Miller.

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

David Beaton

Callum "Beag" Mackay Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur ■ Euan Shirkie Archie MacDonald

Callum Masson Stuart "Bubble" Macdonald Domhnall Mackay (capt.) ■ Lee Johnson Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald

Eachainn Miller ■

Subs. used: Jack Buchanan (Lee Johnson) 45; Andy "Bernera" Morrison (Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald) 78

Subs. not used: Calum "Killer" Mackay; Chris "Christy" Smith.

Yellow cards: Eachainn Miller 82; Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur 83; Domhnall Mackay 83.

**BACK:** 4-4-2

Manager: James "Bomie" Macarthur

Asst. Manager: Donald "Dano" Macdonald

Joel Martin Stuart Macdonald

Stevie Mutch Chris "Moley" Macleod M.J. Maclean Kyle Munro

David Macrae Craig Macleod Jamie Mackinnon Calum MacLennan

Ali "Tolsta" Maciver

Subs. used: Gordon "Gordie" Maciver (David Macrae) 45; Euan Anderson (Stuart Macdonald) 65

Yellow cards.: None.

Last year, on July 31st, Carloway arrived at Col Uarach, knowing that a second League title was within their grasp. A hard-fought victory the previous Friday over a combative Ness side had enabled them to open up a five-point gap at the top of the League over their nearest rivals, Westside, with four games to play. They had already visited Back in the ABC on the opening day of the season but had struggled then to overcome the home side, eventually requiring a penalty shoot-out to progress, after a turgid 120 minutes. In the July League meeting, another difficult contest ensued, which followed that well-worn script indelibly imprinted in Blues' fans' minds. That night Carloway were well ahead in possession and territory but profligacy in front of goal left them slightly fortunate to edge the home side 3-2, thanks to a Fraser "Frazmac" Macleod double and Dan Crossley strike.

Unfortunately, na Gormaich's situation this evening was vastly different from that night: already eliminated from the ABC, Jock Stein, and Highland Amateur Cups, they were dangerously close to dropping out of League contention as well and anything less than victory tonight would most likely kill off any hopes of retaining their League title. So, no pressure. The first item on their agenda, of course, was to forget the misery of the second half at Ness two days before at the hands - or rather

feet - of a certain Mr. Russell-Smith and give thanks that a similar hate figure, Gordon "Gordie" Maciver, was only fit enough to be named among the Bacach substitutes.

The second item of concern was to re-arrange the line-up according to the resources at "Windy's" disposal: a hand injury continued to rule out Donald "D.I." MacLennan, while Neil Sinclair was still on a course in Birmingham. Joe Armstrong was attending a wedding, and Murdo "Squegg" Macleod was unavailable, but there was some good news. Euan Shirkie had signed from West Side and went straight into central defence beside Cameron "Tiger" Macarthur, with Archie MacDonald moving left. Lee Johnson, not seen since his hamstring injury at Garrabost in the second game of the season, was welcomed back in left midfield, beside fit-again, Kenny "Dokus" Macdonald. Former hit-man, Jack Buchanan, graced the bench, along with another blast-from-the-past, Chris "Christy" Smith.

The beautiful, summery weather continued midge-free, although as the sun went down, a chilly breeze came in from Broadbay. Carloway attempted to establish an early control, though in the 6th minute Back broke dangerously down their right wing and this allowed Munro, on the right touch-line, to whip across a square low ball, 22 metres from the bye-line, which reached Chris Macleod in the centre. The playmaker wasted no time but flashed in a nasty right-footer to Beaton's left which forced the goalkeeper to dive and push away for a corner.

Then, in 10 minutes, in Carloway's first serious push for goal, they went ahead, somewhat fortunately. Callum "Beag" Mackay won the ball on the right touch-line, on the centre line, and immediately broke forward. A neat one-two with Masson allowed him to make 20 metres from the bye-line before cracking across a low, inviting diagonal towards Miller. Craig Macleod, coming in towards the near post and mindful of the big striker behind him, attempted to hook the ball away with his left foot, didn't connect properly, and only succeeded in beating his own keeper inside his left-hand post (**0-1**).

It was a body-blow for the home side, but the pattern of play was not altered: Carloway edging possession and employing the patient build-up, while the Bacachs depended more on the fast break, usually down the wings. In 25 minutes, they gained a free-kick, on their right, 16 metres from the bye-line, but Macdonald's high square cross was eventually headed clear. Two minutes later the same player almost went one better, when Munro, from just inside his own half on the right, sent an inviting ball ahead of him inside Archie MacDonald. This allowed him to charge into the right of the Carloway box but Beaton anticipated well, rushing to meet him and stretching high to grab his attempted lob over him goal-wards. On the half-hour, the Blues finally threatened again when a high forward diagonal from Mackay, behind Munro, enabled "Dokus" to charge into the left of the Back box. "Tolsta" came out and they clashed for the ball, 12 metres from the bye-line, 6 metres wide of the goal. The ball broke square inwards towards Miller, directly in front of goal. He allowed the ball to run behind him, then whipped round to his left to wham a right-foot hook goal-wards. However, Craig Macleod had arrived from nowhere on the goal-line and somehow managed to get his left thigh in the way, and the ball rebounded like lightning off to his left.

Ten minutes later Na Gormaich took another giant step to the three points when they won a free-kick, 22 metres from the bye-line, to the right of the box. Mackay chose to slip a diagonal ball low to his right for Masson to cruise into the box, but Jamie Mackinnon clocked the move, yet in his haste to block Masson's advance, clearly brought him down as he passed. "Tolsta" guessed correctly but "Dokus's" low penalty was too deep into his bottom left-hand corner for him to reach (**0-2**).

Three minutes later it nearly got worse for the Bacachs when a Carloway corner from the Blues' left was met by Mackay by the near post but his glancing header smacked the top of the near post and went past.

### **Half-time: Back 0 Carloway 2**

At this point Carloway probably merited their lead, though chances had been few for both sides. Their steady build-ups and hold on possession and territory had been enough to subdue Back's pace and directness, but this had only translated into a record number of corners, not chances. The fact that their goals had come from an own goal and a penalty said it all. From the whistle, the home side threatened down the right. Neat interplay between Munro and Macdonald enabled the former to make 10 metres from the line, in the corner, then fire across a low cut-back, but Beaton, on guard by the near post, contrived to dive outwards flat and snuff out the dangerous cross-ball.

In 56 minutes, the Blues had another chance to wrap the game up when Chris Macleod, 18 metres from the bye-line, and 12 metres in from the touch-line, was slack with his back-pass to "Tolsta". Buchanan, on at half-time for Johnson, nipped in sharpish to win the ball, but his quick flick to the advancing keeper's left, was blocked and cleared.

Then, on the hour, things became much more interesting. A Back move was headed outwards to the Carloway right, from where the ball was returned square inwards to "Gordie", also a half-time substitute, 22 metres from goal. The Blues' back-line stayed put, just inside their own box, giving Maciver, time to size up his options, twist left, then turn right, then send a right-foot daisy-cutter just inside Beaton's left-hand post (**1-2**).

Suddenly, the Broadbay side had momentum and powered forward against a hesitant Carloway midfield, which seemed to lose its coherence and direction, as it tried to re-impose its shape on play. However, it was the 76th minute before the home side came close again. A charge down the Back right saw Macleod play a neat ball, low behind Archie MacDonald, for Joel Martin to come into the right of the Carloway box. As Beaton came to meet him, he managed to lift the ball high over the goalkeeper, then could only watch as it bounced high once, then twice, then land on the top of the net.

However, what began to seem inevitable was only delayed till the 83rd minute, when a "Gordie" free-kick on the Back left, just outside the corner of the box, was driven low through the wall and crept past an unsuspected Beaton's left arm (**2-2**).

Na Gormaich continued to struggle to regain their former composure and initiative, to seek an opening, though Back's pace on the break against their high back-line

remained a constant threat. They seemed to have weathered the storm, as they did at Goathill in the League against United on May 23rd, until yet another free-kick gave "Gordie" an opportunity to achieve his hat-trick in the first minute of added time. This time it was from 20 metres, outside the left of the Carloway box, and he stepped up to send the neatest of right-foot curlers round the left of the wall and just inside Beaton's left-hand post (**3-2**).

**Full-time: Back 3 (0) Carloway 2 (2)**

The similarities between tonight's second half and that of the Ness game are striking, even down to the hat-tricks by the oppositions' star performers, whom they simply could not contain. In both games, na Gormaich must have felt reasonably confident of successful outcomes, going in for their half-time Bovril. Both first-half displays had been reasonably convincing in terms of control, but not chance-creation. Therein, lay their dilemma. The first rule for footballing success - in Europe, anyway - according to Sir Alex, was to hold the ball at all costs, said ruefully after his Aberdeen side's sobering visit to Anfield in 1980. Fast forward to the 2010 Champions League Final, and after his Inter Milan's 2-0 victory over Bayern Munich, José Mourinho said that possession meant nothing; it's what you did with the ball when you had it. This was after a game in which Bayern had about 70% of possession and created a couple of chances; Inter had about 30%, and half a dozen chances.

Carloway like to hold the ball and build from the back. It's when they reach midfield that the problems begin, the choices: do you continue the slow, short-pass style and try to pick your way through the opposition defence, or do you go for the breaker? Both approaches require accuracy from the provider; and the latter, pace and strike-power from the recipient. This might explain the reluctance of the squad to go for the longer pass or a more direct style, but prefer to continue to pass the ball around till an opening appears.

**Back Man of the Match: Gordon "Gordie" Maciver.**

**Carloway Man of the Match: Callum "Beag" Mackay**