

HIGHLAND LEAGUE

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Murray switch pays off for happy Jags

Mixed fortunes for Huntly

BUCKIE THISTLE..... 4
FORT WILLIAM..... 1

BUCKIE THISTLE'S player-manager Malcolm Murray switched himself from sweeper to midfield for the home game against Fort William on Saturday — and that helped himself to a hat-trick.

Murray stamped his authority on the game

from the start, encouraging his young teammates to knock around the ball, a policy which eventually wore down Fort William.

The Jags dominated large chunks of the game, but it wasn't until 57 minutes, when Murray headed in his own and his side's second goal, that the home fans could relax.

Murray had opened the scoring midway through the first half when he lashed onto a

ball 20 yards out and despatched it past the motionless Fort keeper.

The visitors had a couple of good chances which they wasted in the first half and it always looked like they were going to pay the price.

It was virtually one-way traffic for the final half hour and defender Collie Henderson powered a header high into the net from a

corner, before Murray completed his hat-trick from the penalty spot.

Fort had little cause for celebration when Findlay Shearer scored right on the final whistle with an excellent first-time volley.

Buckie's young side were full of running and they have found a gem in 16-year-old left back Paul Lamberton. His intelligent passing and running off the ball belied his age and he

also has speed. Steve Bruce, another 16-year-old, led the line well before limping off in the second half and he also looks a fine prospect.

BUCKIE THISTLE — Dundas, Colson, Lamberton, J. Matheson, Henderson, Murray, McPherson, Beag, Begg, (Lyon), A. Matheson (Graham), Smith (D Arty).

FORT WILLIAM — Campbell, McPherson, (MacDonald), Hales, Bruce, MacLean, Kennedy, Edwards, Redpath, Shearer, Cooper (Tennant, Macdonald, Hales).

Cove stay in course, but seek new blood

ELGIN CITY..... 0
COVE RANGERS..... 2

NEW BOSTON Cove Rangers is ready to get into the transfer market to reinforce the Cove Rangers defence for a Press and Journal Highland League championship challenge.

The former Inverurie Locos manager saw his team get off to a winning start at Borough Briggs, then stressed: "I've a bit of work to do before I can feel comfortable with my squad. We've got the basis of a good side, but I need to try to bring in a couple of players if I can get value for money."

"Most teams are looking for strikers, but we've actually plenty of forward players. We've fewer options, however, at the back, where we clearly lack help."

He added: "My players were disappointed with their performance, but that says a lot for their standards after taking three games to Elgin."

The sons of former Elgin City favourites Keith Nicol and Tommy Wilson came back to haunt their former club.

Darren Nicol, who Cormie had at Locos, worked tirelessly on the left, while Tommy Wilson, who had spells with Celtic and Aberdeen, yet is still only 19, was an eye-opener with his clever runs from midfield.

Wilson has flair and fire and on this sparkling form Cove could be his launched back to the full-time ranks.

Cormie agrees, saying: "It's doubtful if we'll be able to hold on to him."

Sweeper Ritchie Clark, in his third season in the club, yet still only 19, also had an impressive game and Cormie and assistant George Middleton have set themselves the task of getting the best out of him.

The new manager recalled unsettled Colin MacDonald to play through the middle in his first outing for a month and the ex-Montrose attacker showed up well. "Colin's potential is there for all to see," says Cormie.

"I have had a chat with him, assuring him I see a role for him in my plans, but for his part, he has to knock down and work hard."

After a quiet first half, Elgin were getting on top in the second half and creating the better chances, but a head wound which saw Doug Green go off on the hour mark blunted their edge.

Graham Park broke the deadlock 15 minutes from time with a cheeky lob from the edge of the box and six minutes later the ever-alert Mike Beattie drilled home his 10th goal of the season.

Ex-Peterhead keeper Martin Pirie had a sound debut for City, while Mike Green looks a real discovery with his brave daring runs. But he needs support from midfield.

Cove sprung a surprise by taking off centre half Kevin Mann early in the second half in favour of Mike Maggison, but Cormie explained that Mann had been ill through the week and was always going to be substituted after an hour.

ELGIN CITY — Pirie, P. McEwan, B. McEwan, Mike, Mack, McEwan, D. Green (Gill), M. Green, Morrison, Buchanan (Henderson).

COVE RANGERS — Christie, Thow, Whyte, Clark, Nicol (Maggison), Gibson (McPherson), Wilson (Henderson), (Craigie), Beattie, Nicol.



My ball... Roy Main of Lossiemouth, left, and Keith's Kevin Will battle for the ball during the Press and Journal Highland League clash at Kynoch Park.

Broch are on song for cup final date

BRORA RANGERS..... 2
FRASERBURGH..... 2

FRASERBURGH will start next Saturday's Tennants Highland League final clash against Lossiemouth with their unbeaten league and cup record intact, thanks to a last-gasp Kris Hunter equaliser.

The Bellies' marksman pointed to get Broch out of jail at Dudding, Broch, after they had trailed 10-man Brora for 10 minutes.

"We need to do an awful lot better in every department of the game if we want to beat Lossie next Saturday," said relieved Broch boss Charlie Duncan, who had to rearg his line-up after top scorer Paul Keith called off on Saturday morning due to work commitments.

"Brora deserved their 2-1 lead, even with 10 men on the park, and that underlined the fact that we're not playing particularly well at the moment, despite having most of the possession and pressure in most of our couples to date," added Duncan.

"A couple of years ago, I would have settled for a point at Broch, but not any more. We can't be classed as young any more and, while we're a talented team, that's not enough now."

Defender Donald Allan headed the home side in front on the 10-man Brora were out when striker Ian MacDougall was sent off for retaliation and Broch hit back with a Mike McCaffey leveller.



Heads in a win... Lossie's John Sexton and Keith's John Sexton who aerial during Saturday's clash.

Vale boss faces up to growing injury crisis

DEVERONVALE..... 2
GLACHAUCUDHIN..... 1

BANFFERS boss Alan Scott may have seen his side pay a high price for their third successive Press and Journal Highland League victory of the season at Princess Royal Park on Saturday.

Valiant Vale came from behind to beat Glacnacaudhin 2-1, but Scott saw two more players go down in the second half.

Both are now doubtful for next Saturday's game at Fortnes and it's not as if we don't already have enough problems with injuries," said the Vale manager.

Taylor Steve Dolan emerged as the home side's star turn, snatching a last-gasp winner for 10-man Vale, who were left a

man short after Stuart Cameron was red-carded for handling a rebound shot on the goal line in 51 minutes.

Clach sweeper Billy Skinner put the Lilywhites ahead from the resulting penalty, but Vale hit back with a Mark Stewart leveller.

They never looked like they were prepared to settle for a point, even with 10 men on the park.

"But the lads buckled down and fought back really well to make sure we came out on top. They never looked like they were prepared to settle for a point, even with 10 men on the park."

The best is still to come, says Lossie boss Kellas

KEITH..... 0
LOSSIEMOUTH..... 2

BY RITCHIE McNAB

AFTER his well-earned victory that brought Keith's 100% Press and Journal Highland League record to an end, a jubilant Lossiemouth manager Fraser Kellas believes there is still better to come from his joint table-topping side.

"Today's result was just the tonic we needed in view of next week's Tennants Highland League Cup final," said the Coasters boss.

"I thought the final scoreline somewhat flattered Keith. After we got the early goal, we controlled the game and if there was any daw in our make-up, it was our inability to finish as we passed up at least four excellent chances.

"But I must praise the attitude of my players this season. It has been first class and now they sit joint top of the league and I have a feeling there is much better to come from them in the very near future."

While the Lossie fans made their way home in a buoyant mood, the same can't be said for the home fans, who suffered the agony of seeing their side surrender their unbeaten league record, despite having their best share of possession.

Their sheer inability to vary their play was the deciding factor. The continual use of almost high balls to twin strikers Kevin Will and Graeme Cadger made things easy for Steve Gerrard and Graeme Mason, while keeper Mark McLichie will surely never have a quieter Saturday afternoon.

Failed

Even the double substitution early in the second half, which saw Cadger and Will depart in favour of Neil McPherson and John McGeehe, failed to upset the rhythm of Lossiemouth and in particular the game's outstanding contributor, Darren Sill.

Still, well supported in midfield by Scott Patterson and the hardworking Paul Presslie, took only three minutes to make

his presence felt as the Coasters grabbed the lead.

A surging run saw his skip past three home defenders before laying the ball into the path of Gary Clark, who gave Ian Thain no chance from 10 yards.

While continuing to contain the out-of-touch home side, with relative ease, Lossiemouth were always dangerous on the break and in one such swift movement Patterson made the points secure in 72 minutes when he fired home a Clark cut-back.

"It was a bad day for us, despite all our possession and pressure. We never looked like breaking them down," said Keith manager Jim Hamilton.

"While it was still 1-0 we hoped for a wee break that might see us salvage a point, but their second goal just killed us off. They were much faster for the ball than us and on today's showing really looked a good side."

"We had a couple of enquiries about him at the end of last season and through the club season from a couple of Highland League clubs and one or two junior sides, so we'll want to see who comes back on

Left out McIntosh asks for a move

NAIRN COUNTY..... 1
PETERHEAD..... 2

PETERHEAD have transferred last season's forward, Huntly and Turnbull, to Nairn. McIntosh at his own request after the player asked for a move in the second half, but really, the damage had already been done by Huntly before the interval.

"There's just no coming back against a side of Huntly's quality when they've taken a 4-0 lead. We didn't defend well in the first 45 minutes and we got what we deserved."

Mitroy plans to step up his bid to sign Inverness Calce-donian Thistle's Dave Brennan this week, despite the fact that the Aviemore-based defender has missed the Qualifying Cup signing deadline.

He continued: "To an extent, there's not so much urgency now, because he had to be signed on Saturday and will be eligible for Saturday week's cup game against Elgin, but I'm keen to get the deal tied up."

League table

Club	P	W	D	L	F	A	P
Cove Rangers	4	0	0	2	2	12	2
Lossiemouth	4	4	0	0	16	21	2
Broch Rangers	3	3	1	1	8	10	3
Buckie Thistle	3	1	1	1	8	10	3
Peterhead	3	2	0	1	9	9	6
Deveronvale	3	2	0	2	8	9	9
Fraserburgh	3	2	0	2	8	9	9
Wick Academy	3	2	0	2	5	7	7
Broch Rangers	3	1	2	3	18	4	4
Buckie Thistle	3	1	1	3	9	3	3
Clachnacaudhin	4	0	1	3	9	1	1
Fort William	4	0	1	3	8	3	3
Nairn County	4	0	0	4	2	0	0
P. Williams	5	0	0	5	3	0	0

Confident Wick ready to take on champions

WICK ACADEMY..... 1
ROTHES..... 3

WICK ACADEMY are looking forward to testing their mettle against Press and Journal Highland League champions Huntly at Harroworth Park this weekend, after pocketing four points out of six in their last two outings.

The Gaitheath club had to settle for a solitary point against Rothies at home, thanks to a last-gasp Chris Plihosos equaliser which cancelled out Martin Gunn's 49th-minute opener.

"We're disappointed at only getting a draw, but that's a measure of the way expectation here is getting higher and higher all the time," said Wick assistant manager Derek McArdie.

"Our injuries are clearing up and we're beginning to dominate for spells in games. We did that against Rothies and it was encouraging, despite the fact that it didn't win."

"We'll be looking to take something from the game against Huntly up here this weekend — a game which will show us just how much we've improved and where we still need to find more improvement."

Rothies manager Graeme Scott was pleased with his side's response to a disappointing midweek defeat by Devenstone, commenting: "We didn't want to come away from Wick empty-handed after looking very poor against Vale last Wednesday night."



No way through... Lossie's Steve Gerrard blocks an attack by Martin Allan of Keith.