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De Barros ready for Huntly comeback

HUNTLY 3
BRORA RANGERS 0

by **Bill McAllister**

LOAN star Marco De Barros will make his comeback for Huntly against Deveronvale at Banff this weekend — knowing he has only a couple of games to prove he should be the big purchase in Phil Bonnyman's Christmas stocking.

De Barros' four-week loan from Inverness Caledonian Thistle was interrupted by a hairline fracture of his foot in his second game back with the Christie Park club, but he has now recovered.

"He'll train this week and should be ready for the next game," explained Bonnyman. "After the next two appearances both club and player will have to take stock.

"Marco has to consider what he wants out of football and I've got to balance what he can offer against the significant transfer fee, which is money which could be used in other departments."

Bonnyman also revealed the sad news for Huntly fans that skipper Steve Leunes is now being counted out until after the new year as his achilles problem is showing no sign of progress. Hopes of having the midfield playmaker available for the two festive derbies with Cove Rangers have been dashed.

The champions, however, are still progressing on the field and Brora posed little threat to them as Huntly had the game wrapped up before the interval.

The visitors put up stuffy defensive resistance, but Andy Paterson's header from a corner on the half-hour mark was the breakthrough. Then Martin Stewart weighed in with a quick one-two, the second a tap-in, but the first a magnificent effort in which he powered through from the halfway line with the ball at his feet to finish confidently.

The second half was a yawn and Bonnyman admitted: "We found it difficult to generate any fresh momentum over the second 45 minutes and stopped creating chances. But our goalkeeper, John Gardiner, didn't have a save to make all afternoon. Most of my players made a positive contribution, while, at the same time, most of them ended up doing things I was unhappy with."

Aberdeen 17-year-old Scott Simpson made his debut when he played the last 10 minutes as substitute for Stewart and Bonnyman was pleased at the opportunity to blood the lad.

"I'm trying to get youngsters a taste of first-team action," he explained. "But we've had a run of tough fixtures which has made that difficult."

HUNTLY — Gardiner; Grant, Allan, Copland, Paterson; Murphy, P Yeats (M Stewart (Simpson), C Yeats, Green, Smith.
BRORA RANGERS — Suttar; P Houston, Cowie, Sommerville, Jack, Anderson, MacDougall, Mackay, A Houston, Begg, Allan.

Elgin back on right track

ELGIN CITY 2
CLACHNACUDDIN 0

by **Kevin Williams**

A 10-MAN Elgin City side proved to be far too good for a lacklustre Clachnacuddin at Borough Briggs on Saturday.

The Black and Whites shrugged off the loss of playmaker Doug Scott early in the game to give a hard-working performance that pleased manager Chico McHardy.

"After last week's defeat against Forres I asked the players for more commitment and aggression," said the Elgin boss. "When we were down to 10 men, the players gave me the answer I wanted.

"We were never in danger of losing the game and I thought Clach got off lightly with the scoreline."

Elgin started with Welfare League goalkeeper Chris Stewart deputising for back-injury victim Martin Pirie, but the youngster had little to do as the visitors struggled to break down a solid defence.

With Neil Whyte, Duncan Ord and Mike Green looking sharp, and a bit too quick for a lumbering Clach defence, Elgin's deficiency in numbers never looked like being a problem.

Volleyed

Whyte, whose pace gave the visitors problems throughout, set up the opening goal with an intelligent early cross which was volleyed home by the inrushing Ord in the 14th minute.

The crowd had hardly stopped cheering when a midfield clash between Alan Hercher and Scott right in front of the referee saw an elbow raised in anger and the home player marched off for an early shower.

A bad tempered first half ended with Elgin cursing their luck for not being further in front with Ord having a shot blocked on the line and Ian Polworth hitting the woodwork.

Clach, who have a tremendous prospect in 17-year-old midfielder Andy Mackay, tried hard to lift their game in the second half, but found themselves two behind on the hour when man-of-the-match Mike Green finished a solo run with a low drive from a tight angle that deceived the keeper.

City cruised through the last half hour taking the sting out of the sporadic Clach attacks and walking off the field as worthy winners.

ELGIN CITY — Stewart, Dunsire, McVicar, O'Brien, McHardy, Cameron, Whyte, Green (Maguire), Polworth (Moir), Scott, Ord (MacDonald).
CLACHNACUDDIN — Munro, Skinner, Benson, Fletcher (MacDonald), Sinclair, Douglas (Glass), Sexton, MacKay, MacLeod, McCraw, Richardson (Brown).

Double strike boosts Rothes

ROTHES 4
WICK ACADEMY 1

TWO goals in the final minute from midfield man Colin Smith helped Rothes hand Wick Academy a hefty defeat at Mackessack Park on Saturday.

But Speysiders boss Graeme McBeath was quick to admit: "The 4-1 scoreline flattered us, because we were hanging on at 2-1 for the last quarter of the game.

"Colin's late double made us look more impressive than we were over the piece against a Wick side which played the more attractive football in sticky conditions.

"I'll take the three points, but I'll bet my shirt Don Cowie won't be happy at having to settle for anything less than a point at the very least."

Notched

Rothes caught Wick cold with Ricky Thomson's second-minute opener and they doubled their lead five minutes before the break when Richard Forsyth notched a fine solo effort.

But Gary Morton pegged back a goal for the Caithness side right on half-time. Wick grabbed the initiative after the interval and Danny Macrae hit the woodwork before Smith's late double sealed victory.

"We're losing daft goals at bad times — early in the game, close to half-time and late in the second half — and we seem to be at our most vulnerable when we're on top," said Wick assistant manager Colin Chessor.

"We didn't defend the second ball well enough against Rothes and that cost us any chance we had of taking something out of a game we could easily have won."

Lavelle given second chance by Keith

KEITH 0
COVE RANGERS 3

by **Mike Tremlett**

KEITH have handed former Fraserburgh and Cove Rangers striker Andy Lavelle a chance to relaunch his Kynoch Park career after ending a two-year exile in Spain.

Lavelle last turned out for Keith in November, 1995, and he was suspended for breach of contract after turning an extended holiday into an indefinite working stay in sunnier climes.

The 24-year-old arrived back in Aberdeen a fortnight ago and resumed training with the Maroons, who signed him on a new deal on Saturday night which will run until the end of next season.

Experienced

"Andy is an experienced Highland League striker with a 20-25-goal-a-season track record going back to his days as a 17-year-old with Fraserburgh," said Keith assistant manager Alan Lyons.

"Strikers don't grow on trees and we're delighted to have him back at Kynoch Park. He's about three weeks away from being fully match fit, but having him back is like landing a quality player for nothing."

Fighting fit, the prolific Lavelle's nose for goals might have made a difference to the outcome of Keith's battle with rejuvenated Cove Rangers on Saturday, when missed chances cost the Maroons dearly.

"There was nothing to choose between the sides in terms of chances made over the course of the game and we could easily have been 2-0 up at half-time," said Lyons.

"But we handed the initiative to them a bit in the second half and when it came to the crunch we defended poorly, something which has been our downfall on a few occasions this season."

Derek Nicol, Darren Still and Colin Maver all missed good openings for the home side in the first half which saw Cove's in-form keeper Ray Charles keep the scoresheet blank on three occasions.

He touched a vicious drive from Still over the bar early on and pulled off a superb double save to block John Wilson's well-struck 25-yard free kick and Still's close-range follow-up at the end of an even first 45 minutes.

But three goals in eight minutes from Cove — a deftly chipped 75th-minute opener from Tommy Wilson, followed by and two goals in two minutes from livewire Michael Beattie — killed Keith in a second-half dominated by the visitors.

"We won the game well in the end, although we could've done a bit better in the first half when we had plenty of possession without creating an awful lot in the way of clear-cut chances," said happy Cove boss Doug Rougvie.

"What pleases me most is six straight wins and six clean sheets on the trot — a solid base to build on in next Saturday's home game against Wick and the all-important derbies against Huntly over Christmas.

"And we're going into them with five players, who weren't involved in the 14 against Keith, all fit and champing at the bit to play. Competition like that is no bad thing at this stage in a season."

KEITH — Thain, Brown, Wilson, Morrison, Dunn, Gibson, Maver (McRitchie), Still, Nicol, Cadger (Stephen), Stetson (MacPherson).
COVE RANGERS — Charles, Cowie, Cowell, Whyte, Johnston, Rougvie, Maggiinson, Park, Brown (Pressley), Leslie (Could), Beattie, Wilson (Nicol).

■ Keith's Derek Nicol, left, and Cove player-manager Doug Rougvie battle for a high ball.

Vale put on a poor show

FORRES MECHANICS 4
DEVERONVALE 1

SCOTTISH Cup hopefuls Deveronvale crashed to a 4-1 hiding from slick Forres Mechanics at Mosset Park, watched by second-round opponents Stenhousemuir's manager and master tactician Terry Christie.

"If we'd set out to sell Terry Christie a dummy before we play them at Ochilview on January 3, we couldn't have made a better job of it if we'd tried," said disgusted Banffers boss Brian Stewart.

"We haven't put on a poorer performance anywhere this season than that. We got a bad start and, even after some hard talking at half-time, the harder we tried the worse we got.

"There was a glimmer of hope when we hauled Forres back to 2-1 just after half-time, but once they went 3-1 ahead the fourth goal was just a matter of time.

"Terry Christie is far too shrewd to write us off as no-hopers on the strength of what he saw at Forres, but he certainly won't have learned anything about what we can do playing well."

Two goals from in-form hitman Gary Watt, the first after just six minutes and the second in 35 minutes, had the Can-Cans in the driving seat at the interval.

Veteran Alex Grant pulled back a goal for Vale two minutes into the second half, but Brian Minty immediately restored Forres' two-goal cushion and Watt competed his hat-trick in 62 minutes, delighting boss Dave Milroy.

He said: "We're starting to show real confidence after losing just one league game since the end of September and it showed in the quality of our finishing against Vale.

"I suppose the scoreline against Vale flattered us a touch, because it could so easily have finished 10-6 on chances over the 90 minutes, but performances and results like that will keep lifting us up the league table."

Boss is unhappy

PETERHEAD 0
BUCKIE THISTLE 0

"DRAWS like that will kill our league title challenge," warned angry Peterhead boss Dave Watson after Saturday's goalless draw with Buckie Thistle at Balmoor saw Peterhead slump to sixth spot in the table.

"We're eight points adrift of Fraserburgh and they've got a game in hand over us and, ignoring our two league defeats this season, five draws in games we ought to have won have done the damage.

"We did everything but score against Buckie in the first half, thanks to their hard work, which stopped us settling into a rhythm, and some great work by their keeper.

"But we let ourselves down badly in the second half through sheer lack of enthusiasm and players in our squad who think they can live on their Qualifying Cup final laurels need to think again."

He added: "I can accept dropping points in draws if we play well and get a bad break or two, or we come up against opponents who genuinely play out of their skins, but I won't settle for sub-standard performances."

Honours shared

FORT WILLIAM ..... 2 NAIRN COUNTY 2

MARGINAL underfoot conditions which deteriorated steadily after the kick-off in torrential rain sent Fort William and Nairn County away from sodden Claggan Park content with a hard-earned point apiece.

Nairn travelled after a 9am pitch inspection on Saturday morning and looked to be on their way to a win at half-time after a trademark Allan Forbes header put them in front in 43 minutes.

Earlier Steve Howden had opened the scoring for Fort in the 10th minute with Nairn hitman Ryan Green hammering home a blistering 25-yard equaliser just three minutes later.

"At that stage, I thought we were going to come out on top," admitted Nairn manager Jim Walker, who saw Finlay Shearer's mishit 69th-minute leveller snatch victory from his side.

"Conditions were difficult and it made turning almost impossible, reducing most of the 20 outfield players to virtually kicking the ball the way they were facing for 90 minutes."

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pt
Fraserburgh	12	10	1	1	35	13	31
Cove Rgrs	13	9	1	3	38	19	28
Huntly	14	8	3	3	36	20	27
Elgin City	13	7	3	3	23	18	24
Keith	13	7	2	4	36	24	23
Peterhead	13	6	5	2	32	18	23
Forres Mec	14	7	2	5	32	26	23
Deveronvale	14	6	2	6	29	28	20
Buckie Th	15	5	4	6	17	21	19
Brora Ran	12	6	0	6	28	24	18
Clach	15	5	3	7	25	33	18
Rothes	14	4	5	5	22	20	17
Wick Acad	12	3	2	7	24	33	11
Lossiemth	12	2	5	5	11	21	11
Nairn Co	15	2	3	10	22	43	9
Ft William	14	1	2	11	16	55	5

JUNIOR FOOTBALL

North-east trio go down fighting in brave battle for Junior Cup glory

by **Dave Macdermid**

NORTH-EAST interest in this season's S.V.D. Scottish Junior Cup ended at the weekend, when the three surviving sides all went down in their third-round ties, despite putting up brave performances.

In Ayrshire, Lewis United took Alan Rough's Glenafton all the way before losing 2-1.

After a scoreless first half, in which United keeper Tony Buckley pulled off some outstanding saves, the home team took the lead on the hour mark through Stephen Bonar.

Even when David Stewart added a second, the Aberdeen side never gave up and were rewarded when Keith Murray reduced the deficit late on.

Stonehaven were also unlucky, going down to a solitary second-half goal at Tayport.

Turriff United never really got going at Dundee North End, with a couple of strikes in each half enough to see the home team progress safely.

In the opening round of the Rollstud Archibald Cup, Lads Club produced the fightback of the day to oust Banks o' Dee in extra time.

First-half goals from Gary Milne and Martin Greig seemed to have wrapped up things for Dee. However, a Scott Harley double signalled an additional 30 minutes, during which time Ronnie McAskill, Steve Murray and Jamie Watt all found the net for the home team.

Longside remain top of the Stewart Milne Homes Premier Division, despite a surprise home defeat from Hermes, who registered what was only their second league win of the season.

Steve Mearns, Chris Clark and Gary Hake all scored for the visitors, with Graeme Alexander notching the Davidson Park outfit's consolation.

Moving ominously into second spot are champions Sunnybank, who maintained their 100% league record with two second-half strikes at Inverurie Locos, courtesy of man-of-the-match Jason Sutherland.

Formartine United, who over the weekend appointed former Cove Rangers and Inverurie Locos boss Dave Cormie as their new manager, celebrated with a 5-1 victory at FC Stoneywood.

Neil Reid (2), Mark Gray, Craig Martin and Robert Paterson were all on the scoresheet for United with Ray Collins notching the Polo Park team's consolation.

At Crombie Park, Culter and Hall Russell United shared the spoils in a 2-2 draw in which Jed Wallace and Kevin Thomson scored for the home team, with Lee Parker and Finn Jarko Laine replying.

There's no change at the head of the First Division with the top two both drawing. Cruden Bay were involved in a six-goal thriller at Fraserburgh United in which Andrew Gerrie, Stewart Robertson and Scott Duncan were the home marksmen, with John Chalmers (2) and Alan Cooper replying.

A last-minute spot kick from Barry Moir gave Parkvale a draw at Findon, the goal cancelling out Jim Christie's opener for East End.

Ellon United's eightsome reel at home to Inverurie Juniors, in which Colin Cameron (4), Bruce Finnie, Steven Reid and Ian Sim all scored, saw the Meadows side move into third position.

In the other games Maud recorded a narrow 2-1 win at Buchanhaven Hearts, while Banchory St Ternan went nap at home to Dyce.

FIXTURES SATURDAY
STEWART MILNE HOMES LEAGUE — Premier Division: FC Stoneywood v Stonehaven; Formartine United v Inverurie Locos, Hall Russell United v Turriff United, Hermes v Culter, Lewis United v Longside, Sunnybank v Banks o' Dee.
Division 2: Cruden Bay v Ellon United, Dyce v East End, Inverurie Juniors v Maud, Lads Club v Fraserburgh United, Parkvale v Buchanhaven Hearts.

● BUCKIE Rovers won the Morayshire Cup at Logie Park, Forres, yesterday defeating Nairn St Ninian by the odd goal in three.

In the Scotscoup League, Deveronside finished up with 10 men when Fraser was red-carded, but by then were two goals in arrears to visitors Strathspey Thistle. Ewan Davidson put the Jags in front before the break and Gavin Green doubled the score on the hour mark.

FIXTURES SATURDAY (1.30)
SCOTSCOUP LEAGUE — Bishopmill Utd v Kinloss (D. Thewless), Buckie Rovers v New Elgin (J. Fraser), Forres Thistle v Strathspey Thistle (S. Swanson), Islavale v Fochabers (P. Wemmington), Lossiemouth Utd v Nairn St Ninian (K. Simpson), Portgordon Utd v Burghead Thistle (E. Jarvie), RAF Lossiemouth v Deveronside (F. Bain).

Highland fixtures

FIXTURES involving Press and Journal Highland League clubs this week:

TOMORROW (7.30)
JARLAW ABERDEENSHIRE SHIELD — First: Keith v Peterhead (G. Simpson, Westhill) at Princess Royal Park, Banff.
INVERNESS CUP — Semi-final: Forres Mechanics v Inverness Caledonian Thistle (S. Logan, Elgin).
WEDNESDAY (8.0)
PRESS AND JOURNAL HIGHLAND LEAGUE — Fraserburgh v Elgin City (G. Simpson, Westhill).
SATURDAY (3.0)
TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP — First round: Fraserburgh v Clyde (D. MacDonald, Edinburgh).
PRESS AND JOURNAL HIGHLAND LEAGUE — Brora Rangers v Keith (P. Watson, Moosiedoch), Clachnacuddin v Lossiemouth (S. Logan, Elgin), Cove Rangers v Wick Academy (S. Jolly, Aberdeen), Deveronvale v Huntly (J. Bicknell, Inverness), Fort William v Forres Mechanics (M. Johnston, Dufftown), Nairn County v Rothes (W. Murray, Evanton), Peterhead v Elgin City (J. Gover, Aberdeen).

Keith leads the way

LEADING Press and Journal Highland League scorers:

24 — Keith (Fraserburgh).
21 — Stewart (Huntly).
20 — Rumble (Cove Rangers).
16 — Hunter (Fraserburgh).
15 — Watt (Forres Mechanics); **Smith** (Peterhead).
14 — Polworth (Elgin City).
13 — Allard (Keith).
12 — Miles (Peterhead).
11 — Douglas, Bewley (both Deveronvale), Brown (Forres Mechanics).

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