

## **MacPherson Cup 2015: Fifteen Consecutive Wins**

This year's MacPherson cup came down to a very close contest between Portree High School and Lochaber High School, the defending champions. The cold and windy weather made playing conditions difficult but, despite this, both sides dished up a thrilling match which neither side deserved to lose. Lochaber High started strongly and an early Greig Kelly shot forced the Portree keeper into an excellent one handed save. Play swung from end to end with the Lochaber defence of Duncan Stevenson, Jamie Duncan, Ryan Boyle and Alistair MacCrae severely tested as Portree managed to take the initiative in midfield and launch a series of attacks on the Lochaber goal. As Keir Gibson, Billy Rydings and Lachie Shaw in the Lochaber midfield got to grips with the conditions, they were able to give Lewis Clark more possession and he was able to bring Dan Nixon and Victor Smith into play but, despite their best efforts, the first half ended goalless. Lochaber made several changes at half time, bringing on Reagan Porter at full forward, giving Cam Clark a first start and re-organising their midfield in the hope of forcing a breakthrough. Ten minutes into the second half and Lochaber scored the opening goal when Porter's strong tackling put the Portree defence under pressure and a clearance fell to Victor Smith who rifled in a shot from twenty yards out. Boyle and Rydings were stepping up the pressure as Lochaber tried to increase their lead but Portree hit back strongly and Niall MacPhee slotted the equaliser after a slick passing move finally cracked the Lochaber defence. The game swung from end to end in an exciting finale and Portree could have snatched the lead when the ball was pushed past Stuart Disher in the Lochaber goal but he made a great recovery, protecting the ball from the Portree forwards before scrambling it away for a corner. It looked likely that extra time would be needed to separate the teams but Lochaber counter attacked and, in the last minute, after some fine passing, debutante Johnny Forster struck a powerful shot into the Portree net. There was no time to restart the game and Lochaber had won the MacPherson Cup for a record fifteenth year in a row. It is interesting to note that none of the current team were born when this run of victories started.

Both teams displayed a high level of skill and commitment in a very entertaining match which was worthy of any final. Graham Bell presented Lochaber captain, Ryan Boyle, with the cup and thanked Arran MacPhee for refereeing the match, which was played in a very sporting manner throughout.

## **Donella Crawford Cup**

Lochaber High School recently retained the Donella Crawford Cup, the Scottish Schools Girls' Shinty Championship, after an exciting seven team tournament in Kingussie. Lochaber A opened the tournament with a 3-0 win over local rivals Ardnamurchan with two goals from Zoe Smith and captain, Kirsty MacDonald scoring the third. Victories over Charleston and Oban High followed until a strong Kingussie team inflicted a 1-0 defeat on the defending champions. In the meantime, Lochaber B managed strong results against Charleston and Oban to put themselves in with a chance of a semi-final place. In the final group game, Lochaber A played Lochaber B with the A team not only winning but also scoring four goals which threatened to knock the B team out of the tournament. Kingussie finished the group stages undefeated and lined up in the first semi-final against Ardnamurchan who had progressed strongly after the opening game. Against the run of play, Ardnamurchan, opened the scoring and held on despite intense Kingussie pressure to reach the final. In the other semi, Lochaber A played Lochaber B but this time the B team were determined to put in a real challenge and took an early lead through Ami Disher before Zoe Smith levelled and then put her team 2-1 up but Reagan Porter equalised to ensure a thrilling finish. The A team were very grateful to Sarah Davie who scored a late double to send her team into the final. In a tense and exciting final, Smith opened the scoring after good play by Aoife Tangney but the Lochaber defence was under pressure throughout with Hannah Dougan and Kirsty MacDonald having to be at their best to keep Ardnamurchan at bay. Stephanie Walsh in the Lochaber goal made several good saves to keep Lochaber in front before the outstanding Margaret Jane Malcolm set up Smith for a second goal which ensured the cup returned to Lochaber High. Tournament organiser, Kirsty Deans, presented the cup to Kirsty MacDonald, the winning captain, for the second year in succession at the end of an entertaining competition which was played in a very sporting manner.