

# Speedway – skipper Riss leads from front



Eric Riss in the pits at Armadale.  
Picture Nigel Duncan Media

Challenge: Staggs Bar Monarchs 48, Monarchs Champions 40

The Staggs Bar Monarchs beat a strong side of old friends labelled the Monarchs Champions by 48 points to 40, writes Mike Hunter.

Nothing could hide the determination of the current side to make a strong start at home.

They all had their moments with everyone paid for at least points, but perhaps captain Erik Riss and Max Ruml on his home debut were the standouts.

Alex Harkess, Monarchs' team manager, said: "It was a very good workout for the boys and I was really keen that they got on the track before the Shield match at Berwick on Saturday

"The track staff worked wonders and I thought it was a very entertaining night. The only disappointment was an injury to Joel Andersson but it should not be too serious."

Big things are expected from Erik Riss this season and he was dynamic from the starts, and pulled off the pass of the night on Craig Cook in Heat 11.

He did have a fall while leading Heat 7 but explained: "My front wheel nut came off and the bike straightened on the bend. I was very happy to get off the bike. No real damage."

Apart from that his only defeat was to the impressive Rory Schlein in Heat 15. Rory actually passed Riss early in the heat. Erik piled on the pressure to try to return the compliment, belying the fact that it was a challenge fixture in which the result was already decided, but he could not quite catch Rory.

Much attention centred on Craig Cook but the Grand Prix star fell while leading Heat 1 and never quite looked like his old self.

He said: "It's great to be back but I just wish I could have given a better performance. I've spent a lot on my equipment this year but I haven't got it right, and, in any case, I don't really have anything that works round Armadale these days. It's all for Belle Vue and Poland, the engines just drive all the time."

Maybe the most encouraging sign of all for the home side was Max Ruml's performance. He was extremely unlucky in Heat 1, holding second when Cook fell but having to adjust his line which allowed Ashley Morris through.

On the next turn Ruml tried a bold inside pass but there just wasn't quite enough room, which meant they both came off against the fence.

Undaunted, Max took a third in his next before enjoying his first race win quite comfortably in Heat 8, heading the useful Morris. He tried so hard to back Ricky Wells to a 5-1 in Heat 10 but fell victim to one of these lovely inside passes by

Matthew Wethers, a move Matthew made his own in his Armadale days.

It was a terrific debut for the young American, and the other new boy Joel Andersson also won a heat. Joel's night ended unfortunately in heat 14 when Jacob Buckhave surprisingly burst round the outside and headed down the back straight in front, only to fall right in Joel's path at the next bend.

Joel had no chance of avoiding him and went into the fence. He will probably miss the trip to Berwick with a shoulder injury but we should see him again next week.

Josh Pickering will probably be wondering why we have not mentioned him yet after a sound showing with ten points plus a bonu, including a win in the Heat 14 rerun.

Matt Williamson scored in every ride and Mark Riss would have done had he not fallen while leading Heat 3. The track was certainly quite tricky early on.

So that's the opening night out of the way and most supporters must have gone home happy.

STAGGS BAR MONARCHS 48: E Riss 11, J Pickering 10+1, R Wells 8+1, M Ruml 5+1, M Williamson 5+1, J Andersson 5, M Riss 4+2.

MONARCHS CHAMPIONS 40: R Schlein 12, A Summers 7+1, C Cook 6+1, A Morris 6, M Wethers 6, M Clegg 3, J Buckhave 0.