

Speedway — Monarchs v Diamonds



Alex Harkess (right) with John Campbell (left) at the launch of the Stags Bar sponsorship

The Staggs Bar Monarchs race against old rivals the Newcastle Diamonds on Friday (tapes-up 7.30pm) at Armadale with the return on Tyneside on Sunday evening, writes Mike Hunter.

In between, they complete their Championship Shield fixtures with an away match at Berwick Bandits on Saturday.

Having raced only six matches in the last six weeks, the team will be happy to have a triple bill this weekend because all the riders want to be busy.

Few pairs of clubs have a greater history than the Monarchs and Diamonds and, since they first met in 1948, they have raced 183 times and the tally stands at 88-88 with seven draws.

Each club has had periods of ascendancy and almost a third of the matches have NOT been won by the home team.

Neither Edinburgh nor Newcastle is as high up the table as

they would like to be so both are sure to be hungry to take the majority of points this weekend.

Amongst the Diamonds' team solidity is their keynote this year rather than big hitters but each of Ludvig Lindgren, Stuart Robson and former Armadale Monarchs Ashley Morris and Matthew Wethers can certainly claim to be track specialists.

With Max Ruml now gaining a true average (4.00 which is the minimum for a rider starting on an assessed figure), he drops to reserve with Josh Pickering now in the top five.

Having lost at home last week all of the Monarchs will be under scrutiny with the tail-enders really needing to start stepping up to the mark.

Team manager Alex Harkess said: "Newcastle home and away, these are two matches where we've got to come away with what we want.

"We've got to win at home, that's essential, and we have got to come away with something away from home. It's in our hand to do it, it's in the riders' hands to show what they are capable of."

He added "The Berwick match is OK to the extent it gives our boys a run there before they go there in the cup. So I don't mind that being there."

STAGGS BAR MONARCHS: Ricky Wells, Joel Andersson, Josh Pickering, Mark Riss, Erik Riss (capt.), Coty Garcia, Max Ruml.

NEWCASTLE BOILER TECHNICAL SERVICES DIAMONDS: Ludvig Lindgren (capt.), Stuart Robson, Matej Kus, Ashley Morris, Tero Aarnio, Carl Wilkinson, Matthew Wethers.