

Speedway – Flint fall ends Bandits road win hopes

Berwick FTS Bandits went to Teesside on Sunday to face second-placed Redcar Bears, and they pushed them to the final bend despite the home side being boosted by signing former Eastbourne Eagles rider, Lewis Kerr, after his club's closure, writes Lawrence Heppell.

Berwick, in their final away league clash of the year, were looking for some power coming from their upper end having been frequently "reserve led" in 2021.

Heat One was won by Charles Wright having passed Leon Flint (pictured) on the fourth bend as Nikolaj Busk Jakobsen took James Sarjeant on the second lap for a shared 3-3.

Kasper Andersen, as many would have expected roared away to win Heat Two with ease, but for almost a lap his Berwick partner, Greg Blair was in second place until Jordan Jenkins passed him on bend four, but it was a Bandits' 2-4 putting the visitors into a 5-7 lead.

New Bear Kerr went through the tapes at the start of the third race and was replaced by Jenkins, but it was Dany Gappmaier who confounded the experts by taking the lead to the end for three points, and again initially with his partner, Jye Etheridge in second, but Jake Allen passed the Berwick skipper at the start of the third lap and pressed Gappmaier for the last lap. However, the second Berwick 2-4 put the Bandits 7-11 up.

Andersen was first out of the traps in Heat Four but was overhauled by Michael Palm Toft at the end of the opening lap for a shared 3-3, while Busk Jakobsen fell at the start of Heat Five, but all four were called back for the re-run which saw Flint in flight out front for three points ahead of Kerr

while Busk Jakobsen and Allen swapped places, the Bear taking the point in another shared 3-3, and the score was now 13-17.

Heat Six was an amazing race with Blair battling with Sarjeant and taking the third point as Summers and Wright locked horns in tremendous four laps, the Bandit taking the spoils to hit another Berwick 2-4 into the kitty, followed by a Heat Seven 3-3, Palm Toft beating Gappmaier and Etheridge taking the score to 18-24.

Berwick then extended their lead to eight points after Heat Eight which gave Flint an easy win, again early on along with Blair who was passed by Jenkins at the end of the third lap for a 2-4, with the running total now 20-28.

Redcar looked to be on for a home maximum in the ninth until Andersen passed Kerr at the end of lap three, but with Allen out in front it was a Bears' 4-2 pulling themselves a little closer to the Bandits, 24-30, and after a Heat 10 3-3, Wright was brought into the 11th as a tactical substitute for the Bears' Ryan Kinsley, but it was Palm Toft from the gate to flag as Wright and Busk Jakobsen battled for second with the Bandit taking the two points in a 4-2, as the Bears crept ever closer, 31-35.

The Bandits were, however, in the battle zone, with Andersen and Etheridge blasting from the Heat 12 gate to take a rock-solid 1-5 over Allen and Jenkins with the Berwick reserve running a long way in front pushing the visitors' lead to 32-40.

Palm Toft and Wright weren't deterred and hammered home a Redcar 5-1 in Heat 13 over Summers and Busk Jakobsen narrowing their deficit to 37-41 with two races to go, and replaced Kinsley with Jenkins in the 14th as Blair was replaced by Andersen for Berwick, and it was Andersen who passed Kerr off the fourth bend of the opening lap, but Berwick lost a point a lap later when Jenkins passed Gappmaier, and with one race to

go, Berwick still led by 40-44.

The Bandits needed anything but allow a Redcar 5-1 in the final heat to seal victory in Heat 15, and the job was laid in the hands of Flint and Andersen against the Bears' pair of Wright and Palm Toft.

The last race looked as if it would be a 4-2, and enough for a Bandits' win, unfortunately Flint (in second) went too wide on the last bend and clipped the fence and went down allowing Palm Toft and Andersen through, but that presented Redcar with a lucky 5-1 which took the win away from Berwick and tied the match 45-45 instead.

Team manager Gary Flint said: "We deserved the win as it was a real effort to hold the second in the league side, at their own track.

"Leon is furious and frustrated with that last bend fall however that's how speedway rolls at times. At least we didn't lose."

Redcar Bears 45: Charles Wright 3,2,3,1,2*,3 = 14+1; James Sarjeant 0,0, E,0 = 0; Jake Allen 2,1*,3,1 = 7+1; Lewis Kerr E,2.1.2 = 5; Michael Palm Toft 3,3,3,3,2* = 14+1; Ryan Kinsley (r) 0,0,0,N =0; Jordan Jenkins (r) 2,0,0,2,0,1* = 5+1

Berwick FTS Bandits 45: Nikolaj Busk Jakobsen 1*,0,2,0 = 3+1; Leon Flint 2,3,3,0,F = 8; Jye Etheridge 1,1*,2,2* = 6+2; Dany Gappmaier 3,2,1*,0 = 6+1; Aaron Summers 1*,3,0,1 = 5+1; Kasper Andersen (r) 3,2,2,3,3,1 = 14; Greg Blair (guest) (r) 1,1,1,N = 3