

Speedway: Thompson guests for Berwick

Following a huge crash at Berwick the night before, Berwick arrived at Brough Park for a Championship league encounter with the Newcastle Diamonds minus Jye Etheridge and Dany Gappmaier, drafting in guests, Kye Thompson from Edinburgh and former Bandit Theo Pijper from Scunthorpe while Newcastle had Ricky Wells of Glasgow in for the injured Matty Wethers, making it an unpredictable match which could easily go either way, writes Lawrence Heppell.

Nikolaj Busk Jakobsen gated strongly in Heat One to win well, but behind with Adam Roynon in second, Ben Barker appeared to lose power off bend four of the third lap allowing Kasper Andersen the chance to nip through for third in a Berwick 2-4, however Max Clegg and Connor Mountain put Newcastle in the lead in Heat Three with a solid 5-1 over Pijper and Thompson, although in the fourth Aaron Summers gate to flag win, and Bickley's third over Archie Freeman in a 2-4 that levelled the match 12-12.

Andersen made the perfect gate in Heat Five and roared away for three points ahead of Mountain and Wright keeping Busk Jakobsen at the rear in a shared 3-3, taking the scores to 15-15, Roynon retired from Heat Six as Barker chased behind Summers and Andersen to the flag in a Bandits' 1-5, putting Berwick into a 16-20 lead, but Newcastle hauled two points back in the seventh as Wells took the win ahead of Thompson who passed Wright on the second bend for a home 4-2 narrowing Berwick's lead to 20-22.

Wright's win in Heat Eight over Thompson with Roynon passing Bickley on the line for third place levelled scores again 24-24, but Berwick pounced again in Heat Nine with Summers taking his third win of the night over Clegg who battled hard

with Andersen for second in the Berwick 2-4, putting them ahead 26-28 in the nip and tuck battle.

Pijper fell and was excluded in Heat 10 on the third bend but in the re-run Roynon went down on bend one, however the referee deemed Thompson the cause of his fall and excluded the second Bandit from the race with a 5-0 handed to the Diamonds who now led 31-28, a gap that was reduced to 33-32 after another fine gate from Busk Jakobsen having passed Wells who in turn kept Andersen in third for the Bandits' 2-4.

Andersen finished a superb day's work in Heat 12, winning well over Mountain and Wright to tie the race, but the Diamonds were still one point ahead, 36-35 with three races left on the card, and in Heat 13 Wells and Barker defended their early 5-1 well from attack from Busk Jakobsen and Summers who suffered his first defeat of the night, the score now 41-26.

A second consecutive 5-1 to Newcastle, courtesy of Clegg and Wright over Thompson, and the job was done for the Diamonds, with the score now out of Berwick's reach, with one to go at 46-37.

Newcastle Team Manager, Steve Pate said: "This was a vital win for us as we needed to prove we can take good wins and this was a good win. Berwick were up for victory from the off and we knew we were in for a hard battle, but our lads dug deep and got a very deserved victory. This meeting proves what we can do, and now we need to continue for the rest of the season. It was great to see the Max Clegg from 2019 back to his brilliant best. The lad's a start and tonight we saw that, and while there's a few mechanical issues here and there, we are turning our season around now."

Berwick's team boss, Gary Flint added: "Without Jye, Dany and Leon we were up against things from the off, and Theo had an off night, but the guys pulled together and for a good while really worried the Diamonds who were wondering what was going

on, but unfortunately we lost our grip over the last three races, but Heat 10 didn't help after Theo was excluded and then Kye Thompson was when Adam Roynon fell, but to be honest we thought at least it should have been all three back and thought that exclusion somewhat controversial. However, our guys pulled well as a team and deserved more from this match."

Newcastle GEC Diamonds 49: Ben Barker (c) 0,1,3,2*,1* = 7+2
Adam Roynon 2,0,1,2* = 5+1
Connor Mountain 2*,2,0,2 = 6+1
Max Clegg 3,E,2,3,2 = 10
Ricky Wells (guest) 2,3,2,3 = 10
James Wright (r) 3,1*,1,3,N,1*,2* = 11+3
Archie Freeman 0,0,N,0,N = 0

Berwick FTS Bandits 40: Nikolaj Busk Jakobsen 3,0,3,1,3 = 10
Leon Flint – Rider replacement
Theo Pijper (guest) 1,0,Fx,0 = 1
Kye Thompson (guest) 0,2,2,X,1 = 5
Aaron Summers (c) 3,3,3,0,0 = 9
Kasper Andersen (r) 1,2,3,2*,1,1,3 = 13+1
Kyle Bickley (r) 1*,1,0,0 = 2+1