

Speedway – win double for Berwick over Kent

Sitting in next-to-bottom of the Championship. the Berwick FTS Bandits had to overpower their visitors on Saturday night, the Kent Kings, but with their side boasting Australian International Troy Batchelor and seven-times British Champion, Scott Nicholls in their line-up, it was going to be a tough match. writes Lawrence Heppell.

It was made tougher especially with Berwick No 1, Nikolaj Busk Jakobsen, out sick and rider-replacement covering his four outings.

At the end of Heat Four Nicholls and Batchelor were responsible for five of Kent's 10 points as Berwick had taken the lead at 14, Batchelor racing away from the gate in Heat One while Nicholls battled past Kyle Bickley and for a lap chased hard behind Aaron Summers who hit the gas hard to race well for the win.

Flint and Gappmaier roared away ahead of Batchelor and Ben Morley to take a solid 5-1 in the fifth taking the score to 19-11, but Nicholls made light work of winning Heat Six from the gate as Jye Etheridge and Kasper Andresen held the minor places over Jake Mulford in a shared 3-3, while Kent took a 2-4 in the seventh won by Heeps while both Bickley and Summers passed Starke who then made a superb inside pass under Summers to retake a point with the score now 24-18.

Nicholls as a tactical substitute and Batchelor gave Flint and Gappmaier a lesson in gating to take a 1-5 in Heat Nine, the score now a tighter 28-26, while Starke rode a hard last lap in Heat 10, trying to pass Etheridge but with Flint dominant out in front, the home 5-1 cancelled out Heat Nine to restore the six-point Berwick lead at 33-27 with five heats to go.

A Heat 11 3-3, won by Batchelor over Summers was followed by a Bandits' 4-2 won expertly from the Heat 12 gate by Flint yet again over Starke while Batchelor and Nicholls hot the maximum again in Heat 13 with ease over Summers and Etheridge, but a 5-1 from the gate in Heat 14 from Gappmaier and Andersen over Heeps sealed the Championship win for the Bandits with one heat to go.

Individual Riders' Scores:

Berwick FTS Bandits: 47

Nikolaj Busk Jakobsen – Rider replacement

Jye Etheridge (captain) 1*,2,3,2*,0 = 8+2

Leon Flint 3,3,1,3,3,0 = 13

Dany Gappmaier R,2*,0,3 = 5+1

Aaron Summers 2,3,0,2,1,1 = 9

Kasper Andersen (r) 2*,1*,N,F,1*,2* = 6+4

Kyle Bickley (r) 3,0,2,N,1 = 6

No.8 Greg Blair – Did not ride

Kent Kings: 43

Troy Batchelor 3,1,3,3,2*,3 = 15+1

Ben Morley R,0,N,R = 0

Paul Starke 1*,1,1,2 = 5+1

Cameron Heeps 2,3,0,1 = 6

Scott Nicholls (captain) 2,3,2*,3,2* = 12+2

Jake Mulford (r) 1,0,1*,Ts,0 = 2+1

Dan Gilkes (r) 0,1*,2,0 = 3+1

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAGUE: Following the Bandits' four-point win over the Kent Kings the Berwick Bullets came out to tackle the Kent Kings in a full NDLE match which moved on to 16-8 after the opening four races, most notably Ryan Macdonald's Heat Two win in a home 5-1 with Kieran Douglas over Vinnie Foord, while Greg Blair chased hard in the fourth behind Jake Mulford.

Heat Five gave a win for Dan Gilkes well ahead of Luke Crang and Bullets' Ben Rathbone in a 3-3, the score now 19-11, before Kyle Bickley won the sixth well over a hard riding Mulford with Mason Watson, a faller in Heat One, taking third in a 4-2 extending Berwick's lead to 23-13.

Morley took a good win in Heat Seven but behind Blair was at it again passing Josh Warren in second in a thrilling outside line blast round three and four on the first lap to warm up the crowd, but the Royals' 2-4 narrowed the gap between the teams to 25-17.

Watson's Heat Eight was amazing as he went from last to first taking three points from Clouting and Warren with Douglas ending up at the back in a shared 3-3, the score now 28-20, while Ben Rathbone spun and fell hard on the first bend of the second lap with his exclusion from the re-run, in which Luke Crang led well until Mulford passed him on the outside of the back straight on the second lap in a Kent 2-4, taking the score to 30-24.

Following a Heat 10 3-3, a gate to flag win for Blair in Heat 11 over Gilkes and the Bullets' Macdonald, gave Berwick a 4-2 and the score changed to 37-29, but it was Heat 13's home maximum 5-1, won by Blair over Bickley and Gilkes taking third, but that score took the score to a Bullet's winning score of 45-33 with two races to go.

Team manager Gary Flint said: "Once again we, as a club, have presented 30 Heats from 6.30, ending precisely at our curfew time of 9.30 and again this is a testament to our staff, in all departments, the riders of all four teams and the management of both clubs working efficiently together to present a slick and professional show, run well and at speed. We also took two fabulous wins, the Championship against a side brimming with world-class talent chasing the play-offs, so its been an excellent night all round."

Berwick Bullets: 52

Kyle Bickley (captain) 3,3,3,2*,3 = 14+1 paid maximum

Mason Watson 1,1,3,0 = 5

Ben Rathbone 3,1*,Fx,1* = 5+2

Luke Crang 1,2,2,2 = 7

Greg Blair 2,2,3,3,2* = 12+1

Ryan Macdonald (r) 3,0,1,0 = 4

Kieran Douglas (r) 2*,1*,0,2 = 5+2

Kent Royals: 38

Dan Gilkes R,3,2,1,1 = 7

Jacob Clouting 2,2,0,2,R = 6

Ben Morley 0,3,2,3,3,R = 11

Alex Spooner – Rider replacement

Jake Mulford 3,2,3,1*,0 = 9

Vinnie Foord (r) 1,0,1,0 = 2

Josh Warren (r) 0,0,1,1*,1 = 3+1