

Edinburgh Monarchs claim eight point KO Cup advantage over Newcastle Diamonds

What the Fork Monarchs took a step towards securing a place in the quarter-final of the Championship Knockout Cup with a 49-41 victory in the first-round, first-leg against Newcastle Diamonds at Brough Park.

A strong start was backed up by consistent heat wins throughout the meeting and the result was never in doubt and the sides meet again in the second-leg at Armadale on Friday (tapes-up 7.30pm).

Norwegian newcomer, Lasse Fredriksen (*pictured by Nigel Duncan*), who won Heat 1, said: "It was a good win. I like coming to new places and I want to beat everyone so to get the heat win was good as well. We move onto Friday now and we need to complete the job and beat Newcastle again."

Fredriksen set the Monarchs on their way rocketing from the start to win the first race with teammate Sam Masters claiming second position and giving Monarchs a dream start.

The home men were solid throughout, particularly in the middle order with James Wright, ex-Monarchs rider Max Clegg and Paul Starke, a former Glasgow Tigers racer, keeping them in the encounter with five heat wins between them.

Heat 10 was crucial and Monarchs went into the race with a four-point advantage but Diamonds sent out a strong pairing of guest Chris Harris, currently riding for Berwick Bandits, and ex-Monarchs skipper, Matthew Wethers, against the disappointing Paco Castagna and Kye Thomson.

Castagna hit the front out the second bend and, with Thomson

battling his way into second, it was the second heat maximum of the night for the visitors which produced an eight-point lead which was maintained for the rest of the meeting.

A Monarchs spokesman said: "This was a thoroughly professional performance that must make Edinburgh favourites to progress with Friday's second leg at Armadale to come."

Newcastle Diamonds 41: Chris Harris 5+1, Matthew Wethers 4, James Wright 10, Max Clegg 10+3, Paul Starke 9, Lee Complin 3, George Congreve 0

What the Fork Monarchs 49: Sam Masters 13+1, Lasse Fredriksen 5, Paco Castagna 6+1, Kye Thomson 7+1, Josh Pickering 9+1, Jacob Hook 2+1, James Sarjeant 7