

Paco ready for tapes up against Berwick Bandits in SGB Championship with Edinburgh Monarchs

Paco Castagne will make his debut for Edinburgh Monarchs when they open their competitive season in the SGB Championship against near neighbours Berwick Bandits at Armadale on Friday (tapes-up 7.30pm).

The 28-year-old Italian missed the club's practice day two weeks ago because of a red tape issue on his visa however Monarchs bosses Alex Harkess (left) and John Campbell are confident the much-travelled rider will be there.

Monarchs director Mike Hunter confirmed the former Italian champion, the third rider from Italy to race for Monarchs, would be at the West Lothian track and Monarchs will be at full-strength against a strong Bandits combine.

The Borders club opened their SGB Championship campaign with a 58-32 victory over Birmingham Brummies at Shielfield Park last Saturday.

Traditionally, Bandits don't track well at Armadale, but they now have riders who know the West Lothian shale well including ex-Monarchs, Ricky Wells and Theo Pijper, and three-time British champion, Chris Harris, a former British Grand Prix winner.

They also track 19-year-old rising star Leon Flint and Hunter admitted: "Berwick probably have more Armadale experience than our team has."

Monarchs actually go into the clash without having ridden in a

challenge match and Hunter said: "It's the first time we have gone into a league campaign without having races but we hope the boys will click."