

Berwick Bullets shoot down Belle Vue in National Development League

The Berwick Grant Henderson Tankers Bullets finished 20 points ahead of Belle Vue Cool Running Colts in their National Development League (NDL) clash in the Borders.

Greg Blair claimed a paid maximum, Luke Crang also hammering on the power along with another maximum man, Kyle Bickley and all seven Bullets were paid for at least one win in a hugely-enjoyable match.

The end product was a result which took Bullets to the top of the NDL with 13 points from their five matches, seven ahead of second-placed Oxford Chargers and nine in front of Kent Royals who are third.

The meeting opened with two 4-2s to the Bullets, Heat Two seeing some the first of the brilliant passing, first from Freddy Hodder round Mason Watson only for the Bullet to chase hard and take the lead round Hodder to take a great win before Ben Rathbone and Blair held out a vibrant ride from Sam McGurk in Heat Three for a Bullets' maximum, the score now 13-5.

Crang made a great pass round the outside of Harry McGurk off bend two on the opening lap of Heat Four to move the scores on to 17-7, Blair took Heat Five firmly by the scruff of the neck and raced hard in second place, making ground up behind Jack Smith on every bend, passing him round the outside of bend two of the last lap in a shared 3-3 result.

Following a Heat Six 4-2, the Colts bounced back with a maximum 5-1 from Hodder and Nathan Ablitt who held off a late challenge from Crang, who just missed out on the second place while, after the tractor break, in Heat Eight Ace Pijper and

Kieran Douglas returned the compliment with a home 5-1 over Sam McGurk, extending Berwick's lead to 30-18.

Blair looked set for a last in Heat Nine after a woeful gate, a race led by Freeman ahead of Harry McGurk, but he refused to give up and blasted his way to passed his partner, then Freeman and then MCGurk on the last bend to take a brilliant win.

After the 11th race, won by Mason Watson over Colts' Jack Smith, the score was 40-26 going into the 12th, which was led early on by Ablitt chased down by Pijper after he had passed Archie Freeman, but Ablitt held on for the three points in a 2-4 result which narrowed the gap to 42-30.

With only three heats to go, the match was in the bag of the Bullets, but Blair was at his best again in Heat 15, missing the gate but then turning on the power to whip up round Ablitt to again take the chequered flag.

Gary Flint, Bullets' team manager, said: "We did everything right and got the win we deserved, but also we go into these NDL wanting to progress from one to seven, and we did that comfortably.

"I don't think any fans would disagree that that this was top-level fun."

Berwick GHT Bullets 55: Kyle Bickley 14+1, Kieran Douglas 4+1, Ben Rathbone 3, Greg Blair 13+2, Luke Crang 8, Mason Watson 6, Ace Pijper 7.

Belle Vue Cool Running Colts: Jack Smith 7, Sam McGurk 3+1, Nathan Ablitt 10+1, Rider replacement Jack Parkinson-Blackburn, Harry McGurk 7+1, Archie Freeman 2+1, Freddy Hodder 6+1

PICTURE: Action from the meeting by **Keith Hamblin**