

Edinburgh Monarchs overcome adversity to beat Redcar Bears in SGB Championship

What The Fork Monarchs pulled off one of their more remarkable results for some time, *writes Mike Hunter*, by defeating Redcar Bears 48-41 at Armadale in spite of the loss of key man James Sarjeant in an unfortunate Heat 2 incident.

After starting with a 4-2 in the opening heat, Sarjeant contributing a point, the rider was hit by a team-mate at the first bend of the second race. Jacob Hook and Sarjeant got out of the gate but Hook didn't get his bike turned quickly enough and ran into the side of Sarjeant. That was No 7 Sarjeant out of the match and, with Hook excluded, the heat result was 5-0.

Erik Riss and Lewis Kerr won the next two races with a third from Morley making the score 9-14 and, at that point, few would have believed that the Monarchs could possibly prevail. It was a match that had been expected to be close anyway and with Lasse Fredriksen away the home reserves were scheduled to take 11 rides.

However, the picture gradually improved and for probably the first time this season, all the remaining riders produced the goods. The biggest transformation came from the Kye Thomson and Paco Castagna pairing which hadn't clicked so far this season. However, they recorded 5-1 victories in Heats Five and Nine. Heat Five involved Thomson rounding Bears' guest Jake Allen with Castagna slipping through on the inside on the next bend.

It was a maximum in Heat 8 which gave Monarchs the lead for the first time since Heat One and this time it was Hook who backed up Thomson with a steady ride. The lead was extended to five with the Heat 9 advantage but Redcar had reduced that to

just one again by Heat 12 courtesy of Erik Riss who beat both Sam Masters and Thomson with his dynamic gating.

So Monarchs led 36-35 going in to Heat 13. Captain Masters (pictured) gated but Josh Pickering was initially quite a bit back. He soon rounded up Jake Allen but that wasn't enough for Josh, thundering after Kerr even though there was precious little room to work.

On the last lap he scraped the fence on the pits turn and built up such momentum that he was round Kerr as well, hanging on round the final turn. A Pickering special.

Monarchs were now in the driving seat and not about to let go. Castagna took his score into double figures with a good win in Hat 14 but he was backed up by Hook who didn't give the Bears a glimpse of a chance.

Victory was secured and Bears would have needed a last heat 5-1 for a point. Kerr recorded his second victory of the night but Masters ensured there was no way through for the previously unbeaten Riss.

This was Monarchs' best performance of the season and it came in adversity. For Redcar, in truth, other than Riss and Kerr they were a little disappointing though they were of course missing Charles Wright and Jordan Jenkins. Total vindication for the club policy of hiring two ambulances, without which the match would have been seriously delayed or abandoned.

MONARCHS 48: Masters 13, Thomson 11, Castagna 10, Pickering 9, Hook 4, Sarjeant 1, G Miller 0.

REDCAR 41: Riss 13, Kerr 10, Morley 6, Allen 5, Edwards 4, Andersen 2, Roynon 1.