

Josh Pickering stars for Edinburgh Monarchs in big win over Birmingham Brummies

What the Fork Monarchs won 52-36 against Birmingham in a bruising encounter which was notable mainly for the wrong reasons, writes *Mike Hunter* as Monarchs finished with five fit riders to the Brummies four.

Too many incidents and not enough good racing and definitely not the best night for the British Speedway Network to pay their first visit to Armadale. The first half of the match was littered with crashes and delays, though things did settle down for a relatively smooth run from Heat nine onwards.

Monarchs established an early lead at 13-4 after three heats and were annoyed that they didn't extend it in Heat 5 after Kye Thomson and Paco Castagna had made the start only for the heat to be stopped. Nobody could see why and, at the second attempt, Brummies took a 4-2.

Brummies guest Tom Brennan showed his quality by taking a win over Monarchs skipper Sam Masters and the scoring was pretty level over the next few heats. Heat 11 was the best heat of the night with a fine overtake by Josh Pickering (pictured) on former Monarchs star Justin Sedgmen in spite of Justin's best efforts to hold him off.

There were still only six points in it with three races to go, but that was extended with a couple of powerful 5-1s by the maestros Masters and Pickering, really strong on the opening laps of heats 13 and 15.

The incidents. James Shanes and James Pearson were in a three-man sandwich with Monarchs' guest Greg Blair in Heat 2. Pearson and his bike somersaulted into the fence and the young

Aussie was ruled out of the meeting. Greg Blair later revealed that the crash had damaged his machine which caused him problems thereafter.

Ashley Morris came down in Heat 3 whilst second and Sedgmen also stopped in that heat. Heat 6 was a disaster for the unlucky Lasse Fredriksen who had started with a paid win and looked set for another one when James Shanes crashed into him from behind. The Norwegian now has a shoulder injury and we await further news on that.

Heat 8 was the next problem with Stefan Nielsen, James Shanes and Blair all coming down at the second bend after Hook had made the start.

The upshot of this one was that Shanes' helmet was ruled unsafe and the Brummies reserve did not wish to wear a borrowed one and thus also withdrew from the meeting. Although Nielsen rode on, he was also due for a check-up after the match.

So adding to the missing riders Sarjeant and Vissing pre-meeting, are Fredriksen for the Monarchs, Pearson for the Brummies, and also possibly Nielsen. And Shanes needs a new helmet. We wish them all well.

Edinburgh Monarchs (52): Sam Masters 13+1, Lasse Fredriksen 2+1, Kye Thomson 7+0, Paco Castagna 7+1, Josh Pickering 14+1, Jacob Hook 9+2, Greg Blair 0+0

Birmingham Brummies (36): Claus Vissing 0+0, Stefan Nielsen 4+1, Justin Sedgmen 7+2, Ashley Morris 12+0, Tom Brennan 9+1, James Shanes 4+0, James Pearson 0+0