

# Berwick Bandits bid to snap six-match losing streak in double-header

Berwick FTS Bandits, powered by Keenwood Karpets, turn to Newcastle's Lee Complin (pictured) this weekend as they bid to halt a six-match league and cup losing streak.

The Borders club failed to win a meeting, home or away, in May but this coincided with injuries to key men Leon Flint, Ty Proctor and Jye Etheridge.

Teenager Flint returned from a shoulder injury last weekend, scoring solidly in the Knockout Cup, first-leg defeat at Redcar Bears and scoring 12 – including a last heat 5-1 alongside skipper Chris Harris – in Saturday's six-point home defeat at the hands of Glasgow Tigers.

Etheridge remains sidelined by a collarbone injury and the Bandits will use rider-replacement as they face another top three side, Leicester Lions, home and away this weekend.

Proctor also returned at Redcar but an awkward spill in the first heat against Glasgow aggravated neck and arm injuries and he is replaced by Complin for both matches.

Complin was a hugely-popular member of the Bandits' side for three seasons before serious injury prompted his retirement from the sport, aged 28, in 2012. He was tempted back by Newcastle this season and his all-action style continues to delight supporters.

The rider has already guested for the Bandits this season, at home to Redcar and there is no doubt that injuries have blunted Berwick's strong start to the season.

The loss of Etheridge, who was scoring heavily, especially at

home where he had dropped just two points to an opponent in the four meetings before he crashed out against Redcar three weeks ago, was a real blow.

The 27-year-old Australian is hoping to test his shoulder next week with a view to returning to action with both Berwick and his Premiership club Belle Vue.

Harris has carried the burden for the Bandits during their losing run with support patchy at times. Theo Pijper and Ricky Wells suffered off-nights last weekend but there were signs that Reserve Kyle Bickley was beginning to translate his dominant form as skipper of the National Development League Berwick Bullets into the SGB Championship.

The young Cumbrian produced a series of superb overtakes in the closing stages against Glasgow, including a last-to-second ride past Craig Cook and Broc Nichol to join Wells for one of only three heat advantages for the Bandits on Saturday.

Leicester are currently making the running alongside Glasgow and Poole Pirates at the top of the Championship and in Nick Morris they have a former Berwick No 1, the Australian capping a successful 2017 season by winning the League Riders' Championship in Bandits' colours.

Skipper Kyle Howarth is a former winner of the prestigious Bordenapolis at Shielfield Park while reserve Anders Rowe finished fourth in the 2020 British Under-21 Final at the track and helped Edinburgh to a big win there as a guest last season.

Berwick team manager Gary Flint commented: "It certainly doesn't get any easier, Leicester following Glasgow at Shielfield. Ty was not himself after crashing on Saturday and we chatted over the weekend before deciding it would be best for him and the team to concentrate on rehabilitation and building strength back up.

“We decided that Lee Complin was the obvious replacement, both due to his average but also his never-say-die attitude to racing. We’ll need that this weekend but we are determined to get ourselves back into the battle for a play-off spot and get points on the board, home and away.”

Both meetings this weekend – Berwick starting at the earlier time of 6.30pm on Saturday and Leicester at 4pm on Sunday – form the first part of a double header between the Grant Henderson Tankers Bullets and Leicester Lion Cubs who currently stand first and second in the table. Berwick have lost just once all season – at Oxford – and go into the weekend confident of taking maximum points again.

Leicester twins Dan and Joe Thompson – who also feature in the Championship side – and the experienced Connor Coles form a formidable spearhead for the East Midlands combine, but they have been hit with injury to reserves Max Perry and Kai Ward.

As a result, Kieran Lyden, who rides for Redcar Cubs in the Northern Junior League, guests on Saturday with Oxford Charger Sam Woods stepping in on Sunday.

Admission on Saturday is £24 for adults, £20 concessions, £6 for juniors (11-16 years) and £1 for under-11s but a special offer means that adults booking tickets online ([berwickspeedway.com/tickets](http://berwickspeedway.com/tickets)) can add free admission for juniors and under-11 and is by ticket or cash only. There is no facility for credit or debit card payments at admission points.

Berwick Bandits: Chris Harris, rider-replacement for Jye Etheridge, Theo Pijper, Leon Flint, Ricky Wells, Lee Complin, Kyle Bickley.

Leicester Lions: Nick Morris, Connor Mountain, Richie Worrall, Joe Thompson, Kyle Howarth, Anders Rowe, Dan Thompson.

Berwick Bullets: Kyle Howarth, Mason Watson, Ace Pijper, Greg

Blair, Luke Crang, Kieran Douglas, Ben Rathbone.

Leicester Lion Cubs: Dan Thompson, Mickie Simpson, Connor Coles, Tom Spencer, Joe Thompson, Kyran Lyden, Vinnie Foord.