

Double change for Berwick Bandits

Danish SGP2 star Jonas Knudsen and talented young Brit Nathan Stoneman have been unveiled as the new reserve pairing for the FTS Berwick Bandits, powered by Keenwood Karpets.

Subject to British Speedway's approval, the duo will make their debut against Scunthorpe Scorpions in front of the British Speedway Network camera on Saturday, June 25, Berwick's next Championship fixture.

They replace Kyle Bickley and Ty Proctor in the starting seven but the 20-year-old Cumbrian will continue to captain the National Development League Berwick Bullets side and will be lead them against Mildenhall this Saturday (June 18).

Knudsen, also 20, made his debut in the new GP event in Prague three weeks ago while Cardiff-born Stoneman, 25, races for Oxford Chargers in the NDL and has been a regular replacement for the injured Josh MacDonald in the Championship Cheetahs side. He has already raced at Shielfield this season in the colours of both Oxford teams.

Proctor has not recovered from neck and shoulder injuries sustained in a crash at Newcastle on May 1 while the highly-rated Bickley has been struggling for both form and confidence this season. Team manager Gary Flint said: "I'll admit to having some mixed emotions but following discussions with Kyle we feel that his confidence is being damaged by racing in the Championship at the moment.

"We want him to rebuild that confidence by continuing to lead the Bullets and pursue his under-21 and under-24 commitments in both Britain and Poland.

"But as a club we have a duty of care to our riders and there

is no doubt that Kyle's confidence at Championship level is at a concerning low and we don't want to see it diminish any further.

"Speedway is a dangerous game and when a rider isn't high on confidence, the risks are often higher and we don't want to see Kyle not enjoying his racing at this level.

"Nathan is a 100% battler which is what we need at the moment. "Ty Proctor has been totally committed to the club and I can't give him enough credit for that. Unfortunately, his injuries sustained on a less than pleasant Newcastle track are causing constant discomfort and for the good of the team – and with Ty's support – we need to make a change to steady the reserve berth.

"Jonas is a good friend and rival of Leon (Bandits' in-form teenage sensation Leon Flint) stretching back to their 250cc days and is going well in Denmark and Poland in addition to the SGP2 series.

"Although the British tracks are new to him, I'm confident he will crack on and score well.

"I expect full commitment from the team for the rest of the 2022 campaign and with a fully fit seven-man team for the first time in a long time, we will be targeting points on the road, big home wins and a strong run-in to the business end of the season."

Flint also thanked the Glasgow Tigers management who had helped Berwick establish the criteria needed for Knudsen to qualify for a British visa.