

Masters and Pickering star for Edinburgh Monarchs

Oxford Cheetahs led by six points at two separate stages of the match, but gutsy Monarchs fought back to take the three points courtesy of stunning 5-1 advantages in Heats 13 and 15.

The final score was 48-42 and Oxford certainly deserved the point they earned with a solid performance, especially as track specialist Scott Nicholls was missing.

Captain Sam Masters (pictured) admitted that Oxford had put up an excellent performance and he said: "It was a good meeting, good for the fans and we were happy to take the win. I've got to admit that Oxford had a bit of bad luck with two minute exclusions, but that's part of it."

Captain Sam Masters and Josh Pickering rarely fail and in heat 13 they pulled off one of the most spectacular 5-1 victories we've ever seen at Armadale.

All the Cheetahs were scoring well other than young Kileen at No 7. Former Edinburgh Monarchs rider Aaron Summers was riding like he'd never been away and American Dillon Ruml again showed his liking for Armadale, scoring in all of his seven rides.

The circuit was drier than usual as there were threatening clouds overhead alongside a pretty negative forecast and yet no rain arrived. It did mean riders trying to pass on the outside line had to work hard and it took a while for racing to warm-up.

Monarchs took six of the first eight last places and, at that stage, it looked as if Cheetahs' solidity would prevail.

Heat 8 was the first standout race of the night as Paco

Castagna battled on the wide line at every bend, getting ever closer to the team riding Cameron Heeps and Ruml and, with a cutback and dash for the line on the final corner, he got past Ruml and narrowly missed catching Heeps.

An unlucky Heat 12, two-minute exclusion after a machine failure for Summers was tough on Oxford, but Monarchs took advantage with Thomson winning from the hard-working Ruml, meaning the home team led by two going in to Heat 13. And what a heat this was.

This time Oxford guest Leon Flint and Troy Batchelor were clear from the tapes and led down the back straight. Pickering surged into the third corner on the outside of Flint, with Masters on the line, and, as they completed lap one, Flint was relegated to the back.

Pickering then set out after Batchelor and got alongside him, riding neck and neck for a lap with Masters also looking for a chance on the inside. Eventually, the home men moved into first and second for the final lap, gaining a rapturous reception.

Still the match wasn't all over though because the pairing of Summers and Ruml took an easy 5-1 in Heat 14 leaving Monarchs just two ahead going into the final race.

Heat 15 was an easier 5-1 for Monarchs' main men. Josh Pickering didn't gate but burst between Summers and Batchelor to join his partner and ensure a 48-42 win.