

Speedway bosses block Cook guest move by Berwick

Berwick Bandits bid to track Glasgow Tigers' No 1 Craig Cook (pictured) as a guest against Scunthorpe Scorpions on Saturday (tapes-up 7pm) has hit the skids.

Skipper Chris Harris is racing a European Grasstrack Championship qualifier in Denmark and the FTS Bandits, powered by Keenwood Karpets, booked Cook, a former Grand Prix rider to lead the side in the SGB Championship fixture.

But they were told by the sport's governing body that Cook was ineligible as the rulebook did not recognise the event in which Harris is competing.

Gary Flint, Bandits' team manager, said: "We are being told that rules are rules and we cannot have Craig in the team."

Berwick have now booked Paul Starke who is looking for a club since the midweek closure of Newcastle Diamonds and they also welcome back Australian Jye Etheridge.

Dane Jonas Knudsen and Welsh-born Nathan Stoneman make their debuts in a new-look reserve pairing.

Etheridge fractured a previously plated collarbone on May 14 and, in his absence, Bandits suffered six successive defeats, three at home, including a Championship reverse against a Glasgow side containing Cook.

Before his crash Etheridge had dropped just four points to an opponent in 18 races around the Borders' circuit.

Berwick also tweak the riding order with Theo Pijper switching to No 2 and Ricky Wells No 4 while rising star Leon Flint captains the side and fills the key No 5 berth for the first time.

Flint added: "Leon has captained the side once before, against Birmingham in his 2019 debut season, but there's not many Berwick-born lads who have had the chance to captain one of the town's senior sporting sides."

Gary, who was a successful captain of the town's Scremerston-based rugby union club added: "It will be a proud moment when he spins the coin with Simon Lambert – as long as he calls right."

Newcastle's withdrawal from the league means that the Bandits are set to lose their only away point of the season when the league tables are revised and they need to get back on the winning track if they are to reach the play-offs.

Scunthorpe, led by the twin Australian spearhead of Ryan Douglas and Jake Allen, currently fill the final play-off position, largely on the strength of impressive home form which has seen them beat the top three – Leicester, Glasgow and Poole – at the Eddie Wright Raceway, although they did suffer a surprise defeat to Plymouth.

Former Bandit Tero Aarnio and skipper Simon Lambert have scored heavily at Shielfield in the past while another of the highly-rated young Brits, Jordan Palin, is currently recovering well after a slow start to the campaign.

Tickets available from berwickspeedway.com/tickets with the popular kids go free offer to those buying in advance once again offered.

Bandits: Paul Starke, Theo Pijper, Jye Etheridge, Ricky Wells, Leon Flint, Jonas Knudsen, Nathan Stoneman

Scorpions: Ryan Douglas, Simon Lambert, Zaine Kennedy, Jake Allen, Tero Aarnio, Connor Coles, Jordan Palin