

Knudsen stars but gremlins hit Bandits hard at Redcar

SGB Championship: Redcar Bears 53, Berwick Bandits 37

New signing Jonas Knudsen (picture courtesy of **Steve Hone**) again provided some light on another difficult evening for the FTS Bandits, powered by Keenwood Karpets.

The young Dane, fresh from an eye-catching debut at Poole Pirates, who visit Bandits on Saturday (tapes-up 7.30pm), ended the evening by earning his first Heat 15 nomination on a night when Berwick's top two were badly hit by mechanical misfires.

He led team-mate Nathan Stoneman home to a heat two 5-1, Bandits' Theo Pijper having been forced to take to the centre green to avoid Charles Wright when the home skipper locked up in Heat one.

Berwick skipper Chris Harris went into the meeting in red-hot form but seemed down on power as he traded places with Erik Riss but Leon Flint, who will be one of the favourites in Thursday night's British Under-19 Final at the Ecco Arena, rode a typically aggressive first turn to become Berwick's second heat winner in six before Jye Etheridge and Lewis Kerr traded the lead in an excellent race, the Redcar man taking the flag.

Pijper took advantage of Jenkins' lack of control to round the Bears' reserve on the third lap but then, not for the first time this season Berwick's tactical substitution failed to pay off.

Harris – who replaced Knudsen – didn't make it off the line in a Heat 9 where Flint shot into the first turn and inflicted the first defeat of the night on Riss. Redcar built on that

stroke of good fortune as Wright and Edwards left Wells and Etheridge trailing and opened up a 12 point lead after ten races.

Harris again looked short of power as Kerr won Heat 11 and, in the following race, Riss slammed the door shut as Knudsen had a look down the outside of the back straight.

It was Flint's turn to be hit by misfortune in race 13 as his bike seemed to increasingly slow as the race went on allowing Wright and Kerr to extend the lead by bookending Harris.

Knudsen controlled Heat 14 from the front while team-mates Andersen and Jenkins did their best to get in each other's way and referee Phil Griffin gave second place to the Dane when it looked to all and sundry that Jenkins had crossed the line ahead of his team-mate.

Kerr and Harris produced a belter in the final race of the night, the home man gating but then having to go round the boards after the Berwick man cut back inside him.

Berwick team manager Gary Flint said: "I really don't think that the scoreline reflects our efforts but in the end mechanical problems cost both Bomber and Leon when it hurt most.

"Theo had a bizarre night when he could quite easily have doubled his final tally but Jonas again showed why we worked so hard to bring him to this country and why he has already got people talking about his potential.

"He hasn't even had a home meeting, that comes against Poole, and we get the chance to get this meeting out of our systems less than 24 hours later against the Pirates."

A reminder that the championship fixture against the Pirates starts at 7.30pm. Tickets can be bought until 15 minutes before start-time and accompanied children under-16 can be

added free online.

Bears: Charles Wright 10+1, Jason Edwards 7+2, Erik Riss 12, Kasper Andersen 4+2, Lewis Kerr 13, Kyle Bickley 0, Jordan Jenkins 7+1.

Bandits: Chris Harris 8+1, Theo Pijper 5, Jye Etheridge 5+1, Ricky Wells 2+1, Leon Flint 7, Jonas Knudsen 8, Nathan Stoneman 2+1.

Berwickspeedway.com/tickets