

Harkess vows to finish the job at Redcar despite slender first-leg lead

What The Fork Monarchs take a slender 47-43 lead to Redcar Bears for the second-leg of the Knockout Cup semi-final early next month but team manager Alex Harkess declared: "We're heading south to finish the job."

Friday, September 2, is the scheduled date for the second-leg and it is a tough assignment for the Monarchs and Harkess admitted: "We would obviously have liked more of a lead. We let too many points slip away, and the heavy rain pre-meeting was probably a leveller.

"Redcar were very tenacious though, well done to them but we will be heading south in a fortnight to finish the job."

On the plus side for Edinburgh, they got Sam Masters back, intact, and he reported no serious ill-effects at the end of the meeting although he admitted track conditions had not been ideal given his injuries.

Josh Pickering (pictured) had another fine night with the majority of his points taken from the back, and Paco Castagna had probably his best home display of the season with dad Armando watching on.

Monarchs had built an eight-point advantage by heat 7 and were looking to build on that but their hopes were dashed by an eager Redcar side who lost Kasper Andersen in a heat 3 tumble, probably caused by conditions.

Reserves Kyle Newman and Jordan Jenkins provided excellent cover. They lost a 5-1 in heat 2 but outscored the home reserves 14-7 overall.

Richard Lawson proved an excellent guest for Bears and he took advantage of a twice re-run heat 3 to eventually get the better of Paco Castagna who had gated in the first two runnings but not in the third.

The turning point was heat 8 in which Jason Edwards and Jordan Jenkins took a 5-1 over Lasse Fredriksen after Jacob Hook had spun off. Jenkins took a knock, not his only one on the night, but he didn't let anything worry him.

Monarchs hit back through Kye Thomson and Castagna with a 5-1 but they never managed to shake off the Bears. Lawson beat Masters in a thrilling heat 10, then it took Pickering to the last gasp to pip Wright in heat 11. Another last gasp finish in heat 12 saw Thomson catch Newman on the line behind Lawson to stop a maximum loss.

Up to this point Lewis Kerr had done very little but he had a key part to play in the eventual outcome, winning heat 13 in spite of huge efforts by Josh Pickering, with Masters just getting the better of Wright. Monarchs were six up at this stage.

Heat 14 was another great ride by the thrilling Castagna to pass Newman, but the heat was shared. Heat 15 was crucial with Monarchs top two against Lawson and Kerr, but again it was the Bears who gated well and all the home side could manage was a hard-won second place by Josh Pickering over Lawson with Kerr taking his second race win.