

Play-off secured for an Edinburgh Monarchs side inspired by Josh Pickering

Edinburgh What The Fork Monarchs overcame an early deficit to grab race advantages in the final four heats and claim a sensational 46-44 victory at Oxford Cheetahs with Aussie ace Josh Pickering the inspiration.

There is now no combination of results which can prevent Monarchs going through to the play-offs which decide the league title, though it will be some time until fans know the exact positions of the top six.

John Campbell, Monarchs' team manager, (pictured right by *Nigel Duncan*) admitted that he thought Monarchs had no chance here because of the track but he added: "As the track settled down, it became obvious that Josh Pickering was becoming dominant and the other riders were all capable of chipping in.

"As soon as we didn't get the 5-1 in Heat 11, I knew we could put Josh in Heat 12. Jacob Hook's point in Heat 14 was very good and Kye (Thomson) was outstanding in Heat 15 and was very unlucky to lose second place.

"Josh apologised for asking Kye to take the graveyard Gate 4 because he needed to be sure of the race win, but Kye made a start off it."

He revealed that Lasse Fredriksen had injured his finger again in Sweden last week which the club hadn't known about and Campbell said: "It looked bad, but he rode through it, did well and got a vital race win. The whole team deserve great credit, and we had Sam Masters there as well telling them all what they should be doing."

In the early heats it had been all Oxford, leading 20-10 after five heats and 26-16 after Heat 7. At that stage, Edinburgh had just one heat winner, Pickering.

Things then started to change with a fine win for Lasse Fredriksen in Heat 8 backed up by Hook's third, then three drawn heats which still left Oxford 37-29 ahead. Pickering, the tactical substitute, and Thomson took a 5-1 from Heat 12 and that brought the gap down to four.

Pickering rode a brilliant Heat 13 to come from last to first and guest Kyle Howarth picked up the point after experienced Scott Nicholls fell. Two down.

As he often does, Paco Castagna won Heat 14 with another great point for Hook. Then Heat 15, Josh ahead all the way and Kye defying predictions to get off Gate 4, only losing second late in the race. The final score was 44-46.

A club spokesman said: "This might not be the strongest team we have ever had but they certainly know how to fight, and once again they have pulled off a stunning win which takes them to the play-offs."

ENDS

Editor Notes

Fixture: Oxford Cheetahs v Edinburgh Monarchs

Fixture Date: Wednesday 17th August 2022

Start Time: 7:30pm

Location: Oxford Stadium **Result Details**

Oxford Cheetahs (44): Scott Nicholls 10+0, Paul Starke 2+1, Jack Thomas 0+0, Aaron Summers 10+0, Troy Batchelor 11+0, Cameron Heeps 5+1, Dillon Ruml 6+2

Edinburgh Monarchs (46): Kyle Howarth 6+0, Lasse Fredriksen

5+2, Kye Thomson 6+2, Paco Castagna 7+1, Josh Pickering 17+0,
James Sarjeant 2+0, Jacob Hook 3+1