

Rising star Flint vows to make quick return to British Grand Prix

Leon Flint (pictured) got a taste of the big time last weekend and plans to be a regular at speedway's top table for many years to come, *writes George Dodds*.

The Berwick-born teenager made two points-scoring rides as track reserve in Saturday's main Grand Prix – won by Dan Bewley, a former Edinburgh Monarchs and Glasgow Tigers rider – and then scorched to nine points as wildcard in Sunday's SGP2.

Despite a spectacular loop at the gate in his last ride, wins in the previous four put Pole Mateusz Ciernak on the top step of the podium with Kevin Juhl Pedersen second and fellow Dane Benjamin Basso third.

After the meeting Flint, crowned British under-19 champion and established as a heat leader with the FTS Bandits, powered by Keenwood Karpets, said: "Obviously, I am hugely disappointed that we didn't go the distance as I would have gone into the semi-final confident after that heat 19 win.

"I went through all the emotions on the day, highs and lows. Usually I am my harshest critic but given time to reflect on the weekend I am really proud of myself, even more so when I see the kind messages from people saying I have made them proud.

"I feel that I have proved that I belong alongside some the best riders in the world. What I want now is to compete against them on a regular basis."

After following Basso home in heat two there was frustration for Flint in his second ride as he was leading comfortably

when Drew Kemp fell and couldn't clear the track before the red lights came on. In the rerun Juhl Pedersen made the jump and kept Flint at bay.

Third time out from the unfavoured inside gate saw Leon predictably at the back but he managed to force his way past Czech rider Daniel Klima for third.

At the first attempt of an eventful heat 16 Jacob Miskowiak veered wildly across the track from four towards Gustav Grahm from one, the Swede clipping Flint's front wheel and causing him to fall awkwardly before the first bend.

Fortunately, there was no lasting damage to either rider or machine. Grahm gated in the rerun and Leon battled with the previously unbeaten Jan Kvech before settling for another point ahead of the wild Miskowiak.

Jonas Knudsen, who wasn't enjoying anywhere near as profitable an afternoon as his good friend and – when visa allows – Berwick team-mate but the popular Dane did benefit from more Miskowiak madness in heat 17, the Pole spectacularly exiting after hitting the back straight fence, Klima falling awkwardly in the second rerun and Jonas getting a gift two points behind fellow Dane Pedersen after what was effectively a match race.

There was already a strong suspicion growing that the meeting may not go the distance which made it vital that Flint produced something special in heat 19.

Another superb start from gate four and he floated over the ruts and bumps only to be halted by the red lights again after Norick Blodorn hit the deck on the first bend.

The frustration was there for all to see but, after some words of wisdom at the pits gate from Berwick skipper Chris Harris, he dropped the clutch again and this time no one, not even the busy reserve Jason Edwards, was going to deny him a race win which he celebrated in style.

Knudsen finished with four points but it was Leon, level on nine points with Brennan, who led the British celebrations.

The series concludes in Torun on September 30 and with a number of the original field struggling to shake off injuries Leon will be hoping that his Cardiff displays have caught the eye of those allocating replacements.

And there was a final word of thanks to the support in the stands over the weekend from Flint who said: "Thank you to everyone who came along for the ride, it was certainly one I will never forget.

"Hearing everyone screaming my name in the stands gave me the boost I needed and made me realise even more just how much I want this. I don't intend this to be my only Cardiff appearance."