

Bullets await play-off semi-final opponents

Berwick's GHT Bullets are preparing for a Shielfield Park return on 8 October even if they don't yet know the identity of their opponents, *writes George Dodds*.

The date has been set aside for the National Development League play-off, semi-final, first-leg and their opponents will be confirmed no later than Sunday even if there is intervention from the weather which has already wreaked havoc on the Championship and Premiership versions of the title deciding series.

Armadale are due to entertain Belle Vue on Friday night with the Colts needing at least a point to deny Oxford the final qualification place by virtue of superior race points.

If the weather intervenes then the Devils and Colts need to rearrange it before Sunday night's extended cut-off date or the match will be voided giving the Challengers the final place.

First will play fourth, second face third, in the play-offs and the Bullets' trip to Leicester on Saturday, 7pm, will decide the final finishing order. Whoever wins will top the table, a draw or a point for Berwick would see them overhaul Mildenhall in the final standings.

If the weather wins the day – and Sunday at 4pm has been put aside in the event of a need to restage to league campaign finale – the Tigers would finish on top of the table.

“It is still all to play for but what we do know is that whoever the opposition, we plan to stage the first leg of the semi-final a week on Saturday,” Berwick promoter and team manager Gary Flint said.

“Were we to face Mildenhall – which is a strong possibility – then the second leg would be at West Row on 10 October. But we could just as easily be looking at arranging second legs with Leicester, Belle Vue or Oxford!

“I know the boys are desperate to get back on track after what seems like an age waiting for the line-up to be decided.

“We will make a late check on Ace (Pijper) (pictured by **Taz MacDougall**) to make sure that he has fully recovered from his big crash at Mildenhall last time out. He was cleared by a CT scan that weekend and has completed his compulsory time out under the concussion protocol.

“I would say that he is 99 per cent certain to race on Saturday but we would never take any unnecessary risks and are prepared to use rider-replacement for him in needed.”

New averages see Ben Rathbone swap with Mason Watson in the line-up with the Cubs making a similar change to their riding order as Max Perry moves into the top five with Mickie Simpson dropping to reserve.

Tickets for the Berwick semi-final will go on sale via the club website as soon as the opposition is confirmed.

Lion Cubs: Dan Thompson, Max Perry, Connor Coles, Tom Spencer, Joe Thompson, Vinnie Foord, Mickie Simpson

Bullets: Kyle Bickley, Ace Pijper, Ben Rathbone, Luke Crang, Greg Blair, Kieran Douglas, Mason Watson