

Flint calls on his men to rise to the occasion

Berwick FTS Bandits, powered by Keenwood Karpets, launch their BSN Series campaign with home and away fixtures against Glasgow Tigers this weekend.

Bandits' skipper from last year, Chris Harris, is back, but this time the hugely popular rider, nicknamed Bomber, skippers Glasgow having moved to Ashfield during the winter.

Alongside him at Glasgow on Friday night and at Shielfield Park the following evening are two other ex-Bandits and a teenager who shot to prominence in Berwick's National League side, the Bullets.

Even Saturday night's guest for Tom Brennan – on Great Britain duty in the Czech Republic – is known as the Bandit who never was.

Gary Flint, Berwick promoter and team manager, said: "To be fair, the Glasgow lads have probably done more laps around Shielfield in recent years than the current Bandits' seven.

"Over the past five years or so meetings between the two teams have been the matches of the season with Shielfield in particular hosting some superb nights of racing when the two sides have gone head-to-head. Whoever lines up on either side always seems to up their game in this meeting.

"Bomber and Ace Pijper were very popular – and hugely successful – members of the Bandits and Bullets in 2022, but

speedway sees riders move on and it is up to the current Bandits to make become the new heroes for the Shielfield faithful and there is no better place to start than against Tigers.”

Harris and Pijper are joined in the Tigers’ line-up by Danish-born Claus Vissing who had two spells with the Bandits in the 2010s and Lee Complin was in the form of his life with Berwick in 2012 only for injuries to force him into a retirement which ended last season.

Glasgow have booked Scunthorpe’s Jake Allen for Saturday to replace Brennan. The Australian signed for Berwick during the winter of 2015 but never turned a wheel in Bandits’ colours after his assessed average was raised to a level which meant he could not fit into the side.

For the Bandits, Australian Rory Schlein – who has returned from a one-year hiatus in sensational form for both Berwick and Wolverhampton in the Premiership – and Englishman Connor Coles, who has two top-scoring National League performance with the Bullets under his belt, will be making their home debuts, while Danish racer Thomas Jorgensen returns to the club after a gap of seven years.

The Bandits’ only outing so far this season was a 16-point Knockout Cup defeat at Redcar while Glasgow got the better of the Scottish derby in the new BSN Series, losing narrowly against Edinburgh at Armadale and then clinching the extra aggregate point after an emphatic victory in the return on Sunday.

Berwick skipper Leon Flint has spent much of the week in Poland getting his machinery ready for what he hopes will be his U24 Ekstraliga debut on Sunday.

Assuming the paperwork is completed in time, he will ride for Ostrow against his Polish parent club Rybnik, grasping the opportunity after his new side was hit by a rash of early-

season injuries but the 20-year-old said: "My focus is solely on Glasgow and getting the Bandits off to a flyer in the BSN.

"While we were disappointed with the final score at Redcar we still felt that there was plenty of good things to build on. Meetings don't come much tougher than Glasgow who start each season as favourites to win silverware. A lot has been said in the build up about the ex-Berwick riders but we have a side that knows its way around Shielfield too.

Tapes-up at 7.30pm in Glasgow and 7pm at Berwick.

PICTURE: Flint and Harris in Berwick leathers last year