

# Freeman breaks leg in heavy Bullets defeat

**Berwick Bullets' were left counting the cost of men and machinery as their opening National Development League clash of the season ended in a heavy 61-29 defeat at Belle Vue Colts.**

Teenager Archie Freeman (pictured by *Keith Hamblin*) suffered a broken leg and Mason Watson a slight concussion forcing their early withdrawal from the meeting while Josh Embleton, one of only two Berwick race winners at the National Speedway Stadium on Good Friday was withdrawn from his final ride after suffering burns to a leg in an untidy tumble.

With skipper Greg Blair blowing one engine and suffering more mechanical gremlins with his second bike and borrowed equipment the visitors always had an uphill task against the fast-starting home side.

Sam Hagon roared to a full fiver-ride maximum while James Pearson and Jack Smith were both paid for full houses, Connor Coles, Danny Phillips and Jamie Halder – along with Embleton before his misfortune – made them work hard for their points, especially in the second half of the encounter.

Berwick must now regroup and use a combination of guests and rider replacement when they travel to Leicester on Saturday night.

Earlier, Freeman made the best gate in the opening heat but

seemed short on power as Smith and Luke Muff overhauled him. He visibly slowed as he moved to the inside line leaving Coles with nowhere to go other than into his young team-mate.

Coles fell heavily while Freeman slid off further around the corner but the damage had been done in the collision and when medical staff got the young Geordie's his boot off a broken leg was quickly diagnosed.

Belle Vue steadily opened up a comfortable lead with only Phillips and Coles able to challenge the home side,

Bullets, sponsored by Grant Henderson Tankers, finally had something to cheer in heat eight when Embleton and Halder gated together and were never troubled, recording what would turn out to be the visitors' only heat advantage of the meeting.

Embleton was challenging again in the next heat only to fall awkwardly, the bike flipping on top of him and the hot exhaust burning through his kevlar.

Phillips and Halder split the points behind Smith in 11 while their sole representative in 12, Coles, kept Paul Bowen at bay but couldn't catch Pearson.

With Embleton in some discomfort the hard-working Halder was on his own in 12 but couldn't prevent another 5-1 for Hagon and Hodder.

Another followed in 13 as even aboard Embleton's bike, Blair couldn't complete the four laps.

Phillips led from tapes to flag in 14 to share the points but he was left at the back in the nominated riders' race, Coles' gating well but unable to recover after Hagon moved him out to the fence on the first bend.

Gary Flint, Berwick's team manager, said: "There was no way back after losing Archie and Mason so early in proceeding and

it is such a shame for Archie who had gated really well but seemed to slow dramatically leaving Connor nowhere to go.

“He basically ran over his leg. It was the impact which caused the damage rather than the fall and initially the concern was for Connor who hit the fence heavily.

“Initially Mason seemed to have recovered pretty well from his Tai Woffinden impression into the third bend fence but he came to me in the pits saying that his vision was a bit blurry.

“We’ll take no chances with head injuries so that was him out for the meeting and for the next nine days. Josh was beginning to look good but then fell, the crash was innocuous enough but the hot exhaust burned his leg and we rested him from his final rides because he was in quite a bit of discomfort.

“Jamie probably wasn’t expecting seven rides from his first meeting of the season but he was one of the bright spots of the afternoon while Danny and Connor showed flashes. Look, you cannot deny that it was a heavy defeat, but one of the things about this level is learning and moving on. That’s exactly what we have to do with just a few hours before we are back on track at Leicester.”

**Colts:** JackSmith 11+1, Luke Muff 3+1, Sam Hagon 15, Matt Marson 5+2, James Pearson 14+1, Paul Bowen 4+1, Freddy Hodder 9+1

**Bullets:** ConnorColes 8, Archie Freeman 0, Mason Watson 0, Danny Phillips 9, Josh Embleton 4, Jamie Halder 5+2