

Schlein-inspired Bandits mug Edinburgh at Armadale

BSN Series: Edinburgh Stellar Monarchs 41, Berwick FTS Bandits 49

Delighted Bandits promoter and team manager Gary Flint warned his Berwick side not to rest on their laurels despite their stunning victory at Edinburgh.

The FTS Bandits, powered by Keenwood Karpets, bounced back in superb style from last weekend's home mauling by Glasgow Tigers to record a rare Armadale victory.

Former Monarchs Rory Schlein (12+1), Jye Etheridge (9+1), and Connor Coles (9+2), led the way against their former employers as Berwick put themselves in the driving seat to collect the aggregate bonus point when the sides meet again at Shielfield Park on Saturday (7pm).

Flint said: "We're taking nothing for granted because Edinburgh have riders who are more than capable of putting us under pressure at Shielfield Park.

"Having said that, I am delighted with our performance at Edinburgh. After the disappointment against Glasgow we asked the riders for a positive response and we couldn't have asked for more.

"From the moment they arrived there was a totally different feeling about it. They were working for each other as a team, helping each other and got their reward.

"We still have to be on our guard, but with Edinburgh visiting us and then our trip to Glasgow we have put ourselves right

back in the mix. That's the level of performance that we expect from them every time."

He added: "Rory, Connor and Jye will deservedly get the headlines, but everyone was paid for at least a win which is really good.

"Gate four was the one to be on and after Leon (Flint) lost the toss we were quite happy to see Edinburgh choose one and three early on. That meant we had four when it really mattered at the start and end of the night."

Coles was thrust into the spotlight after fellow reserve Nathan Stoneman was forced out of the meeting with shoulder injuries and a knock to the head from an awkward looking heat four spill.

The popular Welshman will miss the remainder of the BSN qualifiers, Oxford's teenage prospect Luke Killeen guesting for him on Saturday.

But, in his absence, Coles teamed up with Schlein, Heat six, and Etheridge, Heat 14, for match-winning 5-1s.

Danish duo Thomas Jorgensen and Jonas Knudsen added another race maximum over home star Craig Cook in Heat 11. In all Berwick riders took the flag eight times, with six of them paid for at least one race win.

Edinburgh's Kye Thomson suffered misfortune when a shed chain caused him to crash while comfortably leading Heat nine, but they only led twice on an evening dominated by the fast-starting Bandits.

This is one of the few Berwick sides to take a celebratory bow in front of their travelling fans in West Lothian and a delighted Schlein said: "Connor was definitely our match winner tonight, although, to be fair, everyone put in a good shift.

“Last week (against Glasgow) wasn’t nice but tonight was a different story. I said during the week that we had to react positively and we certainly did that. To be honest the real difference between the two meetings was that we made the starts tonight.”

Coles, who is rarely seen without a smile on his face, was positively beaming as he added: “That’s my best-ever meeting at this level and I was really pleased to be able to contribute, especially after losing Nathan.

“The couple of races that I wasn’t so good my team-mates were quick. I was a real all-round performance and I’m glad for the supporters after the Glasgow meeting.

“It also puts us right back in the running in the BSN Series with the return against Edinburgh and then Glasgow away still to come.”

Monarchs: Josh Pickering 9, Lasse Fredriksen 5+1, Kye Thomson 6+1, Paco Castagna 7, Craig Cook 9, Kyle Bickley 0, Jacob Hook 5+1.

Bandits: ThomasJorgensen 8, Jonas Knudsen 4+1, Leon Flint 6, Jye Etheridge 9+1, Rory Schlein 12+1, Connor Coles 9+2, Nathan Stoneman 1+1.

PICTURE: Connor Coles *by Nia Martin*