

Superb Cook leads Monarchs to opening night win

Craig Cook made a triumphant return to his former club when he steered Edinburgh Monarchs to a 48-42 victory over another of his former clubs, Glasgow Tigers, at Armadale in the BSN Series.

The Cumbria-based racer, once a skipper at Edinburgh, powered to 14 points including winning the final heat with Monarchs' current skipper, Josh Pickering, second for a 5-1 victory.

Cook (pictured) won four of his five heats for the Stellar Omada-backed Monarchs to end the night on 14 points with Kye Thomson next best with eight points and Pickering and Paco Castagne on seven.

For Tigers, 40-year-old Chris Harris showed his class by top scoring with 14 points from six rides with Benjamin Basso next best on nine. Young Ace Pijper, son of former Monarchs skipper Theo Pijper, scored one for Tigers.

Pickering won the first heat from tapes to flag with Lasse Fredriksen third, the pair being split by Harris, but the 4-2 scoreline was followed by two 3-3 draws before Monarchs clinched another 4-2 with Cook winning the heat and Jacob Hook third.

The next four were shared but a 5-1 thanks to Thomson and Castagne in Heat Nine took the home side eight points clear.

Basso won Heat 10 for Tigers with ex-Monarchs star, Claus Vissing, second for a 5-1 with Pickering falling challenging the two Tigers on lap two and that brought the scoreline back to 32-28.

Back-to-back draws in the next two races was followed by a 4-2 for Monarchs in Heat 13 leaving the home side six points ahead at 42-36 but Tigers hit back with a 5-1 in the penultimate race to close the gap to two points with tactical substitute Harris doing the damage and Vissing coming home in second position.

That left the stage clear for Cook who gated but Pickering was trailing in last place until the Aussie burst through Harris and Tom Brennan on the fourth bend to take a 5-1. The two Monarchs celebrated as they crossed the line.

Monarchs: Pickering 7, Fredriksen 5, Thomson 8, Castagne 7, Cook 14, Kickley 1, Hook 6

Tigers: Harris 14, Nowak 3, Basso 9, Vissing 6, Brennan 6, Complin 3, Pijper 1