

Berwick looking for points at Plymouth

Berwick Bandits are hoping that inside knowledge will provide the key to unlock a run to the Cab Direct Championship play-offs, writes George Dodds.

New boys Hans Andersen (pictured by *Taz McDougall*) and Steve Boxall enjoyed contrasting fortunes on their club debuts on Saturday, the Dane producing a solid performance while Boxall was on the pace but out of the points in the ten-point defeat by Poole Pirates.

Berwick head to Plymouth on Tuesday and both riders have enjoyed enormous success around the tricky and tiny Coliseum track – it measures a mere 216 metres – track knowledge which could prove vital in what promises to be a tight match.

Andersen was a member of the Gladiators' side which reached last year's play-offs while Boxall's history is a bit more distant, averaging over five for the then Devils in the 2016 Premier League and remaining with the club when they dropped to the National League, rattling up over nine points a match in 2017.

With Jonas Knudsen racing at The Coliseum for the first time and even Rory Schlein only making his third appearance their inside line on set-ups could be vital.

Leon Flint missed last year's eight-point defeat in Devon through injury, but he did guest for Redcar later in the

season.

Connor Coles was a slight injury concern after his very untidy spill against the Pirates which left his battered and bruised but he declared himself fit.

Points from the Berwick engine room are likely to be the deciding factor against a Plymouth side whose only win this season came against Scunthorpe back on May 2.

Since then, Poole, Oxford and Birmingham have taken the points home with them despite the strong top three of Kyle Howarth, Ben Barker, and Richie Worrall.

Dan Thompson – on his fourth club in the top two divisions already this season – is the man tasked with scoring the points along with fellow teenagers Dan Gilkes and Ben Trigger.

The weather has also frustrated Plymouth, the call-off of the original fixture against the Bandits on July 4 when heavy rain fell 30 minutes before tapes-up was the first of six consecutive rain-offs for the Gladiators.

Berwick team manager Scott Courtney said: “With each passing meeting the opportunities to get the points needed to grab that sixth place and a play-off spot grow rarer and rarer.

“Poole are always a tough ask, even at home, but the manner in which we stuck to our task and battled for every point was almost as important as the result.

“Hans looked pretty sharp for his first British meeting in almost a month while Steve was very much in the mix and unlucky that his score didn’t reflect those efforts.

“Again, it is a question of our riders doing their jobs and putting pressure on Plymouth. “The potential is there for this to be the week that we propel ourselves back into the mix with five points at stake against Plymouth and Birmingham.”

Gladiators: Kyle Howarth, Dan Thompson, Ben Barker, Dan Gilkes, Richie Worrall, James Pearson, Ben Trigger

Bandits: Rory Schlein, Jonas Knudsen, Jye Etheridge, Leon Flint, Hans Andersen, Steve Boxall, Connor Coles