

Brilliant Harris mugs Bandits

Ashfield has never been a happy hunting ground for the Bandits, but this was one of the most comprehensive maulings suffered over the years.

From the moment Rory Schlein's machine failed the leave the startline in heat one to the chequered flag of heat 15 – Glasgow's seventh 5-1 of the night – little went to plan for the visitors, *writes George Dodds*.

Architect of their downfall once again was the man who sported the Bandits' number one last season, Chris Harris (pictured) completing what, even by his standards, was a remarkable maximum, he could even afford to give the visitors a 15-meter start in one race and was so far ahead in another that he was able to freewheel over the line.

Berwick's shell-shocked fans had to wait until heat 11 to see one of their men take the chequered flag, at the third time of asking Schlein's machinery went the distance, the Australian leading Tom Brennan all the way home.

Benjamin Basso was also paid for a maximum, overcoming a clash with Jye Etheridge which relegated him, briefly, to the rear of heat three before recovering to follow Claus Vissing home.

Hans Andersen at least halted the run of home 5-1s in heat four, but it was brief respite as Schlein's second engine failure meant another Vissing/Basso maximum.

Andersen was then pipped by Harris after a good scrap between

the two veterans, but fellow Dane Vissing saw his maximum hopes end in heat eight when he ploughed through the tapes at the first time of asking and was then excluded when he jumped the start again from the 15-metre handicap line.

But Berwick hopes of cashing in ended when Pijper gated and took a well received, at least by the home fans, heat victory.

Harris added another layer to his folklore status when his bike packed up at the tapes in heat 10 and he was excluded for exceeding the two-minute allowance. Aboard a machine loaned from skipper Tom Brennan he then started 15-metres back, passed Etheridge and team-mate Lee Complin on the second lap and caught leader Leon Flint on the first bend of the fourth lap for a quite astonishing win which, quite rightly had the crowd – both sets of fans – in rapture.

They had barely settled down when Schlein finally found a firing engine and showed his class by winning 11, earning a tactical substitute ride in place of Etheridge in the following heat but he couldn't keep pace with Basso from the gate.

His third race in a row saw him split Harris and Brennan in 13 and Berwick looked like they might just claw their way to the 30-point mark as Flint made the jump in the penultimate heat, but Vissing found a way round him off the third bend, the Berwick skipper having to fend off a series of attacks from Complin to protect second.

All that was left was for Basso and Harris to complete their paid maximums. Harris coasted home behind the Dane after his engine let go coming off the fourth bend, neither Flint nor Andersen close enough to deny him his victory bumps.

The only ray of sunshine for Berwick is, as they prepare to face the Tigers again on Saturday, Harris will be in Germany preparing for the latest round of the world longtrack championship.

Berwick team manager Kevin Little admitted: "That was a pretty horrible night when nothing went right. We need to get our heads together and put in a much better performance at Shielfield on Saturday night."

Tigers: Chris Harris 14+1, Marcin Nowak r/r, Benjamin Basso 13+2, Clau Vissing 11+1, Tom Brennan 9, Lee Complin 10+3, Ace Pijper 5+1

Bandits: Rory Schlein 7, Steve Boxall 4, Jye Etheridge 0, Leon Flint 7, Hans Andersen 5, Jacob Hook 2+1, Connor Coles 2+2