

Bullets cut as Berwick owners look to future

Owners Scott and Jamie Courtney have confirmed that they will be back at the helm at Berwick Bandits for an eighth year in 2024.

However, the club will not compete in the National Development League (NDL) next term and Belle Vue's rearranged visit to Shielfield Park on September 16 will now be the last meeting of the season and the swansong for the Bullets.

Scott Courtney said: "Bullets have been almost entirely funded by me and Jamie with the level of support nowhere near to covering the costs of the experiment.

"After an incredibly demanding season on and off the track, we have made the decision to channel our attention towards the Bandits and a revamped youth system for 2024."

Pre-season hopes that the Bandits would at the very least qualify for the revamped Cab Direct Championship play-offs never materialised as they were hit by season-ending injuries to Nathan Stoneman, Thomas Jorgensen, and Connor Coles.

A number of other riders struggled for form, not helped by a fixture list which saw big gaps between home fixtures.

They have managed just two home victories in the Championship – against Scunthorpe and Redcar – along with home and away victories over Edinburgh in the BSN Shield.

Bullets – runners-up in their debut season and play-off semi-

finalists in 2022 – find themselves well adrift at bottom of the NDL with Archie Freeman and Josh Embleton sidelined by serious injuries while skipper Greg Blair was one of many to struggle with fitness all season.

Jamie Courtney added: “As with every year, plans for the following season both within the club and at BSP level began in July and 2023 has provided us with our most challenging season on track.

“We are ready to regroup, rebuild, recharge, and go again. Bringing the fans, sponsors, and supporters of Berwick Speedway the best possible version of the club in 2024 is our top priority and we are well underway with plans to improve in all areas.

“A sporadic fixture list, unpredictable weather, lack of rider availability and probably the toughest the economic climate to run a speedway club in ever led us to ask ourselves some big questions.

“We have always been resilient through the toughest of times. Ever since the Taylor family founded the club back in 1968, there have been trials, tribulations, victories, defeats, controversies, heartbreak, and the odd triumph.”

The Bullets name will not be lost to the sport entirely as Berwick continue to provide opportunities to the next generations of British youngsters via their purpose-built training track – the Grant Henderson Tankers Academy – at Duns in the Scottish Borders.

PICTURE: Jamie (left) and Scott Courtney by *N/A*