

Riss stars as Monarchs take crucial road win

Cab Direct Championship: Plymouth Gladiators 44, Stellar Monarchs 46

The Stellar Monarchs saved the best till last as they took maximum heat advantages in each of the last two heats to take a massive 46-44 victory at bottom club Plymouth Gladiators.

In slick conditions that saw passing at an absolute premium, it all came down to a heat 15 decider with the Monarchs off the unfavoured gates one and three.

It looked like the home men were favourites but no one told Monarchs captain Josh Pickering and excellent guest Erik Riss (pictured) that as they made the jump and rode four faultless laps to take the victory, remarkably the only time on the night the Monarchs were in front.

Gordon Campbell, Monarchs' stand-in team manager, said: "It is a tight race for the play-offs with Plymouth being a rival for the final spot so we were determined to get a result.

"This showed with every member of the team having a moment to be proud of in the match and chipping in with vital points at vital moments. A special thank you to Erik Riss who was a terrific guest at No 1."

Campbell said Monarchs must bounce forward from this result and he said: "With the backing of our wonderful supporters we can finish the home season strongly and clinch that play-off spot."

On a day that saw plenty of rain in the area and track covers

only lifted during the afternoon, the name of the game was to get to the first bend in front and keep it low for four laps.

The hosts were well served by James Pearson who took wins in heats two and nine but, with main men Kyle Howarth and Richie Worrall both looking a little frustrated with conditions, Monarchs kept themselves in touch throughout.

There were key contributions throughout with six of the seven taking at least one paid win, these often coming at key times when it looked like the home men were going to take control.

Heat eight a great example of this as Max Clegg saw a perfectly good start pulled back when he had hit the front only to repeat the feat in the re-run in a race that on paper looked a strong one for the Gladiators.

Kye Thomson and Paco Castagna did their jobs magnificently throughout also, packing in behind Howarth twice and Worrall before each won their final outing to record paid nine and nine respectively.

Bastian Borke saved his best for last as most expected a tactical substitute replacement in heat 14 after the Monarchs had slipped six down, Borke had other ideas in what was the heat of the night.

So, it was down to the Monarchs main two, Pickering, who had an up and down night, and former skipper Riss. Pickering had the misfortune of being off the inside but, rather than concern himself with unsettling Howarth on his outside, he found a fresh bit of dirt on the white line to fire himself to the front.

With Riss emerging from a tight first corner to tuck in behind Pickering it was a case of waiting out the four laps as the glory went to the Monarchs.

Plymouth 44 : Howarth 13+1, Newman 7, Perry 0, Worrall 12+1,

Pearson 10+3, Trigger 2+1

Edinburgh 46 : Riss 12+1, Clegg 4, Thomson 6+3, Castagna 9,
Pickering 10, Killeen 2+1, Borke 3+1