

Bandits warning from team boss Dickson

Stewart Dickson has warned his new-look Berwick Jewson Bandits to expect the unexpected when the season launches at Shielfield Park on Saturday (7pm).

Workington Comets have recruited an experienced top three in Craig Cook, Troy Batchelor and Claus Vissing, but the Cumbrians have also gambled on their return to Championship speedway after a six-year absence.

Teenager Sam McGurk steps-up from National League racing while Finn Antti Vuolas, Australian Tate Zischke and German rider Celina Liebmann are racing in Britain for the first time.

Liebmann, the undisputed world No 1 female speedway rider, becomes the first woman to compete in professional team racing in Britain.

Vuolas and teenager Zischke were two of the emerging stars in last year's Polish under-24 league.

Dickson, Bandits' team manager, said: "Darcy Ward speaks highly of Tate and Justin Sedgmen tipped me off about Antti when he was riding for me at Leicester last season. Workington have done well to tempt them."

Dickson's revamp means that Bandits, powered by Keenwood Karpets, hand home debuts to five riders but Drew Kemp, Lewis Kerr, Danyon Hume and Dane Bastian Borke are all experienced at this level.

Highly-rated teenager Freddy Hodder makes his Championship debut after a match-winning 15 points for Belle Vue Colts on his previous visit to Berwick in the National Development League.

The Border Trophy is at stake and will be decided at Workington's purpose-built Northside stadium on Sunday (3pm).

Comets will have a competitive match under their belts when they arrive in Berwick as they are scheduled to race at Scunthorpe in the BSN Series on Good Friday.

Dickson added: "Normally you look at your opponents and work out who's got a great record at Shielfield, who's struggled and who's a bit hit and miss, but Workington have three riders new to Britain, never mind Berwick, so we won't know until the night. Shielfield Park is a unique circuit, big, fast, highly banked and some riders take a few visits to work it out.

"Others get it straight away. To be honest, I'm not overly worried about the opposition because if my riders do their job then I'm confident that we have assembled a side to do well this season both home and away.

"There is definitely a buzz around the town at the moment and it is up to us to keep that going and I don't see this as a meaningless challenge match. Anything with a cup up for grabs is worth winning."

Bandits: Lewis Kerr, Danyon Hume, Jye Etheridge, Drew Kemp, Rory Schlein, Freddy Hodder, Bastian Borke

Comets: Craig Cook, Claus Vissing, Antti Vuolas, Tate Zischke, Troy Batchelor, Sam McGurk, Celina Liebmann

PICTURE: Rory Schlein in action taken by *Taz McDougall*