

Dickson believes Bandits can bounce back at Edinburgh

Berwick Jewson Bandits team manager Stewart Dickson has “no fear” that his side can bounce back from their first defeat of the season.

Bandits find themselves fighting for their future in both the BSN Series and Cab Direct Knockout Cup this weekend and their recent defeat at Glasgow Tigers heaps pressure on the riders ahead of their visit to Edinburgh Stellar Monarchs on Friday (tapes-up 7.30pm).

Dickson believes it is a “must-win meeting” for Berwick who currently top the Scottish section with four points from their three completed fixtures.

Glasgow and Edinburgh still have to race each other home and away with five points available to them.

Broken ankle victim Lewis Kerr is sidelined and Scunthorpe’s Kyle Howarth guests for the Bandits who won the corresponding fixture last year.

A repeat would put them on course for at least the highest runners-up spot in the knockout stages of the BSN competition.

Rory Schlein, Jye Etheridge, Drew Kemp and Bastian Borke return to their former club while Danyon Hume has been on the winning side at Armadale in the colours of Poole, Glasgow and Redcar Bears over the past three years.

Edinburgh have yet to ride at Armadale this season due to the

wet spring and Dickson believes that may work in his side's favour.

Dickson said: "We could catch Edinburgh a bit cold on Friday as they weren't even able to get on track at their Pres and Practice Day.

"If you had said pre-season that we would go to Armadale with a chance of reaching the knockout stages and only beaten once then I think most of our fans would have taken it.

"Now we're in that position. It is in our hands to make it happen. We travel with no fears and determined to put on a show for our supporters."

Howarth switches sides overnight when he leads holders Scunthorpe in the first leg of the Knockout Cup at Shielfield Park on Saturday (7pm).

Poole's Richard Lawson guests in place of Kerr two weeks after leading the Bandits' to a dramatic last-heat victory over Edinburgh.

Berwick built up a reputation as a cup side with two wins and a further five final appearances in the early days of the competition.

But their last appearance was the 1989 victory over Poole – a night when Mark Courtney, father of current club owners Scott and Jamie, a 16-month toddler at the time – led the Bandits to a giant killing victory.

Since then it has been, a 2009 semi-final appearance aside, slim pickings with a string of first round departures in recent years.

Visitors Scunthorpe – managed by popular ex-Bandit David Howe – also beat the Pirates in last year's final but they did lose the second leg of the preliminary round at Plymouth 39-52 last weekend, going through on the back of a 61-29 first leg

mauling of the Gladiators.

Howarth, Jake Allen, Simon Lambert and reserve Luke Harrison, who cut his teeth as a 125rider in Berwick's Northern Junior League side, all have impressive records at Shielfield.

Scunthorpe reserve Nathan Ablitt suffered an ankle injury in the first leg against the Gladiators and in his continued absence the Scorpions have called on former Belle Vue Colt Jack Smith.

Monarchs: Josh Pickering, Lasse Fredriksen, Kye Thomson, Paco Castagna, Justin Sedgmen, Max James, Connor Coles

Bandits: Kyle Howarth (Saturday Richard Lawson), Danyon Hume, Jye Etheridge, Drew Kemp, Rory Schlein, Freddy Hodder, Bastian Borke

Scorpions: Kyle Howarth, Connor Mountain, Simon Lambert, Michael Palm Toft, Jake Allen, Jack Smith, Luke Harrison

Referees: Jim McGregor (Friday), Willie Distington (Saturday)

PICTURE: Rory Schlein and Justin Sedgmen renew rivalries on Friday, the start of a big weekend for Berwick Bandits by ***Keith Hamblin***