

Dickson warns his Bandits: 'be prepared'

Berwick Jewson Bandits boss Stewart Dickson told his side to expect an early onslaught from hosts and defending champions Scunthorpe Scorpions in Friday's Knockout Cup quarter-final, second-leg.

The club's No 1, Lewis Kerr, passed an intensive fitness test on Wednesday night and will take his place at the Eddie Wright Raceway four weeks after fracturing his ankle.

And the aggregate winner of the tie will face Poole Pirates in the semi-final. Oxford and Redcar are the other sides one step from the final.

Berwick travel to Lincolnshire with an 18-point lead and Dickson said: "The first four races are so important. Some riders have stronger characters than others and can bounce back during the meeting, but it can put others on a downer for the rest of the night.

"Scunthorpe are very, very good around the Eddie Wright Raceway and, speaking to Rod Godfrey this week, they fancy their chances.

"We need to be on our A-game, not just in the early heats, but through all 15. We want to be in that draw alongside Oxford, Poole and Redcar, but there are only seven riders who can make that happen."

Cup holders Scunthorpe have scored 52 points at home against Redcar and 61 in the cup first round against Plymouth Gladiators, although Workington Comets restricted them to 49 points last time out.

Berwick have a modest record around the Lincolnshire track and will rely heavily on the knowledge of Drew Kemp, a member Scunthorpe's 2023 cup winning side.

Kemp is keen to stay on course for a unique cup treble having also collected a winners' medal in Poole colours in 2022.

He scored 12 points in the first leg with guest Richard Lawson leading the way with a five-ride maximum and skipper Rory Schlein was also in double figures, 13 plus a bonus, on a night when the Bandits were missing Australian Jye Etheridge.

Berwick, cup winners in 1980 and 1989, have a poor recent record in the competition and are bidding to reach their first cup semi-final since 2009.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, they look to build on their good start to the Cab Direct Championship season when Plymouth Gladiators visit Shielfield Park.

The Gladiators lost their league opener at home to Workington on Tuesday, but Ben Barker and Dan Thompson return to the Borders seven days after scoring impressively as guests for Redcar.

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

Scunthorpe: Kyle Howarth, Connor Mountain, Simon Lambert, Jake Allen, Michael Palm Toft, Nathan Ablitt, Luke Harrison

Plymouth: Guest tbc, Alfie Bowtell, Dan Thompson, Kyle Newman, Ben Barker, Joe Thompson, Jacob Hook

Referee: Friday Wayne Jarvis; Saturday Seth Perkin

PICTURE: Stewart Dickson with Rory Schlein. Picture ***Keith Hamblin***