

Bandits aim to sting consistent Scorpions

Dan Gilkes, a newcomer with Redcar Bears, and former Berwick racer, Paul Starke, have been recruited as the Jewson Bandits attempt to get their season back on track.

The Borders club face a tough task at Scunthorpe Scorpions on Friday as they look to bounce back from the Lincolnshire side's 46-44 victory at Shielfield Park on Saturday night in the Cab Direct Championship.

However, Scorpions have lost only three league fixtures on home shale in as many seasons and thrashed the Bandits 62-28 there three weeks ago.

Michael Palm Toft, almost unbeatable around the Eddie Wright Raceway, is out with the broken collarbone after a Heat six crash at Shielfield last weekend and Scunthorpe will operate rider-replacement for the Dane.

Berwick's Lewis Kerr will be hoping it's third time lucky as his previous two meetings in Berwick colours have seen him crash out in the first heat both times.

His right leg stood up to a stern test in Monday's Premiership clash between Oxford and Leicester Lions where he completed all four races on his Spires' return and looked very much on the pace.

Gilkes, who began the season concentrating on the Premiership with Sheffield, signed for Redcar in place of former Bandit

Jonas Knudsen and made his Bears' debut at Scunthorpe last Friday.

He has a decent record around the track from his time with Plymouth, although it was also the scene of a season-ending April 2022 crash when he suffered arm and chest injuries on a night when the Gladiators won by six points.

Gilkes takes the place of Jye Etheridge who is still sitting out his mandatory nine-day concussion protocol and Starke replaces Danish Bastian Borke who will be watching the action on the British Speedway Network from his hospital bed in Denmark after crashing at Poole.

Stewart Dickson, Berwick's team manager, said: "No-one is doing what Bastian did before his crash, scoring eight and ten on a four-point average, but Paul is a solid scorer with a decent record around Scunthorpe."

He added: "We are up against it because the home side are flying at the moment but we have to go there determined to make something happen.

"Amid all our recent problems, Rory (Schlein) and Drew (Kemp) have been in top form and we need them to lead from the front again along with Lewis (Kerr)."

Friday is the first of three away meetings before the Bandits return to Shielfield Park on June 22 and this Saturday the only action is the Attis Sports Division British Final at the National Speedway Stadium.

Schlein, the champion in 2020, and Kerr fly the Berwick flag with Kemp still waiting to hear whether he will be called up from the reserve berth.

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

Berwick: Lewis Kerr, Danyon Hume, Dan Gilkes, Drew Kemp, Rory Schlein, Freddy Hodder, Paul Starke

PICTURE: Drew Kemp in action for Bandits