

Captain Cook in top form for Comets at Monarchs

Former Monarchs captain Craig Cook powered to 17 points to top score for Workington Comets in this Cab Direct Championship clash, but the under-strength Cumbrian side lost on the night but still collected the aggregate bonus point in a 55-35 defeat at Armadale.

In-form Cook (pictured before the meeting by *Nigel Duncan*), won five of his six races and he only dropped a point when Josh Pickering won Heat 13 with Cook in second position.

The 37-year-old former British Champion and a Scottish Open winner, who rode for Monarchs from 2011 to 2015 and again in 2023, was backed up by 36-year-old, former Grand Prix rider Troy Batchelor, as Comets took the aggregate score to 96-84.

What's more, Stellar Monarchs suffered an injury blow to popular Aussie Justin Sedgmen who withdrew from the meeting after a spectacular four-man pile-up coming out of the first bend in Heat Four.

Comets rider Sam McGurk picked up drive on the inside and was in collision with Monarchs duo, Connor Coles, and then the unlucky Sedgmen. All four riders ended up of the track.

Sedgmen was lifted from the track by a stretcher and was given treatment trackside.

Overall, Monarchs top racer was Josh Pickering with 13 points and skipper Paco Castagna was the next best on 12 with Finnish racer Lasse Fredriksen on 11.

The home side recorded back-to-back 5-1 scorelines in Heats Two and Three to ease to a 13-5 lead but the 61-29 first leg deficit from the Northside Stadium in mid-May hung heavy even if two of Comets regular riders – ex-Monarchs rider, Claus Vissing, stranded in Denmark, and Celina Liebmann, stuck in Germany – were absent because of the IT chaos at airports around Europe.

Another home 5-1 in Heat Nine moved the scoreline to 33-21 in favour of Monarchs and another heat maximum in the next race made it 38-22 before 4-2 in the penultimate heat saw the home side move 20 points in front.

The home side who drew the final race with Cook again coming home in front with Pickering second and Castagna third.

Monarchs: Josh Pickering 13, Kye Thomson 8, Lasse Fredriksen 11, Paco Castagna 12, Justin Sedgmen 0, Max James 4, Connor Coles 7.

Comets: Craig Cook 17, rider replacement for Tate Zischke, Antti Vuolas 5, Laylan Richardson 1, Troy Batchelor 9, Mason Watson 0, Sam McGurk 3