

Kildemand in for Bandits after shock Schlein retirement

Double Grand Prix winner Peter Kildemand will lead the revamped Berwick Bandits into the 2025 Cab Direct Championship campaign.

The 35-year-old Dane, who returns to British speedway after a seven-year absence, replaces Rory Schlein in the Shielfield Park septet following the retirement of the popular Australian rider.

Reigning British under-21 champion Sam Hagon and Aussie rider Dayle Wood complete the team alongside Drew Kemp, Danyon Hume and Bastian Borke and Craig Cook.

Kildemand had a brief spell for Poole in 2018 after lifting the Elite League title during a successful four-year spell with Swindon.

During that period he won the Danish Grand Prix at Horsens in 2016 and the Slovenian round at Krsko the following year.

The Dane's previous second tier experience was in the Workington sides of 2010 and 2011 and the man from Odense will also race for Oxford Spirens in the 2025 Premiership.

Last season, Hagon beat Berwick-born Leon Flint and Ashton Boughen to lift the National title at Glasgow last season and was also a key member of the treble-winning Poole side, gaining promotion to the main body of the team after a strong start to the campaign as number six.

The 20-year-old helped Pirates to a narrow victory at Shielfield Park and made two guest appearances for the Bandits covering for the injured Borke.

Stewart Dickson, Berwick's team manager, handed him his Championship debut at Birmingham in 2022 and the pair will be working together in the Premiership where Hagon has been named as Leicester's Rising Star for 2025.

Completing the revamped side is 30-year-old Wood who headed to Britain two years ago – helped by money raised when multiple World champion Tai Woffinden donated the proceeds from a trophy auction – to follow his dream of becoming a professional speedway rider.

He enjoyed a brief spell for Edinburgh in 2023 in addition to racing for the Armadale club's National Development team.

Kildemand's signing comes after last year's skipper Schlein reversed his decision to re-sign for the Bandits following his recovery from the neck and shoulder injuries which prematurely ended his 2024 season.

Schlein said: "My work commitments drastically changed after I had agreed terms with (Berwick owner) Jamie Courtney meaning that, much to my disappointment, I won't be racing next season.

"It wasn't an ideal situation for the club or the fans but even after breaking the difficult news to Jamie and (team manager) Stewart Dickson they have been supportive and understanding. I wish Berwick all the best as they push for that long-awaited trophy."

Dickson admitted to being "shocked" when Schlein revealed his change of heart and added: "He's been an integral part of the club for the past two years and a fantastic captain.

"Rory's news left us in a difficult position but, despite it

throwing a spanner in the works, we've worked diligently to get the best seven guys on the track.

"Jamie Courtney worked very hard to get the Peter Kildemand deal over the line and I think we have a mixture of experience and exciting potential which will give Bandits fans a team to get behind in 2025."