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WARD WINS MEETING, HOLDER WINS TITLE

In what could have only been described as the most difficult meeting ever staged at Mildura's Olympic Park, dual World Under 21 Champion, Darcy Ward, from Queensland won the Coomealla Memorial Sporting Club, Australian Solo Title final round and Defending Champion, Chris Holder, held on the take his third consecutive National crown in a meeting whai was a poor one for him.

The meeting was marred by track consistency issues which were a result of "over watering" of the track surface during the many hours prior to the meeting, with Club officials being influenced by the hot conditions than may have been necessary.

The track was in need of some drying out in one corner, as too much water was under the track, which caused an unacceptable delay in the start time for the event.

Club officials were embarrassed with both the delay and the cause for the delay, which left patrons wondering what was happening, as clearly, the track was being constantly groomed to try to rid the soil profile of dampness. Referee, Dave Mills, from Sydney maintained a composure which demonstrated his long experience in the sport. Mills, at all times kept a mind on the requirements of the riders and the need for the meeting to progress.

Once the meeting started, it was obvious that conditions still were not suitable for good and safe racing, with some riders coming down in the offending turn, turn one. Further track work was ordered.

Finally the meeting got under way, with officials being most mindful of rider safety and thankfully, whilst some riders did hit the deck, they did so without major issues or injuries.

The eventual Title winner, Chris Holder, had a night of very mixed fortunes, as he was only able to manage a seven point score line for eleventh place overall.

Form rider on the night was Darcy Ward, who was only beaten by local star, Justin Sedgmen during the heats, but that was in the last heat of the night, when Ward's place as first rider into the "A" final was assured.

Second top points for the Coomealla event, was Rory Schlein, who finished two points in arrears of Ward, but two points ahead of each of Kozza Smith, Ty Proctor and Cameron Woodward. It was Woodward who took the third place available in the main final on countback, with the other two tied riders needing to ride the "B" final, where only the winner would progress to the night's main event.

Justin Sedgmen and Englishman, Kyle Newman were the last two into the secondary final and turned out to be the two to watch. Sedgmen got away well to take an early lead, which he consolidated, only to be attacked by the young English rider in the last lap. Newman moved Sedgmen wide in the final bend and made a better sprint to the line, to leave Sedgmen fifth place for the night.

The main event, was finally started, well after midnight, saw Ward get away from both Woodward and Schlein, who just headed Newman, until a coming together in lap three resulted in Newman tumbling down the track from about the start line down towards turn one. It seemed as though he may not have been left much room by the SA rider, Schlein, but the race was stopped and Newman was excluded from the re-run.

Ward again got away easily and went on to win comfortably from Woodward and Schlein.

The good result for Ward, also had further ramifications, in that Ward's first place on the night, combined with the experienced, Davey Watt's poor return for the night, left both Queenslanders on even points after the four Championship rounds. A run-off was required to decide overall second place for the Championship, even though the meeting was running well after the normal Mildura finish time.

Ward continued his good form of the night, by dispatching Watt into third place.

Watt was the rider most affected by his low points return, as he, like Holder, only finished with seven points for the Mildura meeting.

A good points return, combined with the low points of Holder, could have seen Watt take his first ever Australian Title as he could have swallowed up the points buffer which Holder took into the meeting. Watt later lamented his lost opportunity, but congratulated his Grand Prix colleague Holder, on his win, saying that he was not able to put pressure on the small points buffer which Holder took into the meeting.

Sadly for Watt, it wasn't to be and he had to settle for third place behind each of his Poole team mates, Chris Holder, who now has three consecutive Titles, with Ward in second, Watt third and Schlein in fourth.

The three Mildura riders, Cameron Woodward, Cory Gathercole and Justin Sedgmen finished in fifth, sixth and seventh places respectively in the overall Championship.

Mildura Club apologises to our many valued patrons and sponsors and assures speedway fans, that lessons are learned and the a repeat of the failure of the Club to provide good conditions does not continue.

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