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**Table tennis notes by Chris Blake**

With a short break in the league fixtures of the Sunderland & District Table Tennis League the teams turned their attention to the 2nd round of the Team Handicap Cup.

The cup competition sees players allocated an individual handicap based upon the standard to which they play. This attempts to cancel out any advantage a Division 1 player may have for example over a player who plays in the 2nd or 3rd Division – should the teams be pitched against each other in the draw.

The matches are the best of 9 sets (each player playing 3 sets); with each set being the best of 3 games played to 21 points, with each player having 5 alternative serves.

**2nd Round Team Handicap Cup Results:**

1. St John B (D3) 9 vs. West CA A (D1) 0
2. Silksworth IM B (D2) 5 vs. West CA B (D2) 3
3. Lanchester CC (D3) 1 vs. Sacriston St Bedes C (D3) 8
4. Sacriston St Bedes A (D2) 6 vs. St Gabriels C (D3) 3
5. Mortimer CA (D2) 6 vs. Thompson Insurance B (D1) 3
6. Redby CA C (D3) vs. St Gabriels B (D2) (not played)
7. Silksworth IM A (D1) 5 vs. St Gabriels A (D1) 3
8. St John C (D3) 9 vs. Redby CA (D2) 0

Silksworth IM A are the only Division 1 side to have made it through to the quarter final stage following their 5 – 3 win over Division 1 rivals St Gabriels A.

With Silksworth IM A currently joint leaders of Division 1 it was no surprise that they were required to give their opponents a head start on average between 5 - 9 points.

This was a very close match which was effectively decided by Silksworth’s No.2 player Ryan Richardson who finished the match unbeaten. Despite having to give his opponents a head start he defeated George Gibson and Tom Bainbridge by the narrowest of margins (21 – 19 & 25 – 23) and (21 – 18, 15 – 21 & 21 – 19) respectively and Norman Pescod (21 – 19 & 21 – 16).

Ryan was closely supported by his father Barry Richardson (1) and Rod Roberts (1) to ensure Silksworth progressed to the quarter final stage.

The pick of the bunch for the Saints was Norman Pescod who won 2 of his 3 sets.

Match of the round saw the clash between 2nd Division leaders Sacriston St Bedes A and 3rd Division team St Gabriels C who are currently placed in 4th position.

In a very close match 7 out of the 9 sets were determined in the deciding end in a game which ebbed and flowed throughout. At one stage the match score stood at 3 sets all only for Sacriston to edge the final 3 sets to win the match 6 – 3 and book their place in the quarter final.

This was a real team effort by Sacriston with Paul Dale, Kevin Smith and Jon Mawson each winning 2 sets.

Syd Gooding, Alan Ray and Graham Murden all played their part for St Gabriels in an entertaining game which could have easily been decided in the Saints favour.

Sacriston now go on to face current Division 3 leaders St Johns B who had a 9 – 0 win over West CA A of Division 1. This should be a mouth-watering tie which sees the leaders of Division 2 & 3 pitched against one another.

Silksworth IM B had a 5 – 3 win over West CA B. Howard Brown was man of the match for Silksworth for the 2nd week running having won all of his 3 sets. Vic Austin was voted man of the match for West CA B – winning 2 of his 3 sets only to lose out to Brown by the narrowest of margins (18 – 21).

Silksworth IM B will play the winner of the outstanding 2nd round match between Redby CA C and St Gabriels B.

Sacriston St Bedes C (D3) booked their place in the quarter finals with an 8 – 1 win over Lanchester CC also of Division 3.

The young Lanchester side represented by Jack Brewis, Callum McCabe and Harry Robertson gave a good account of themselves but found Sacriston St Bedes C (currently lying 3rd in Division 3) too strong on the night.

Lee Maher and Chris Grant were undefeated for Sacriston and were closely supported by Ian McPherson who chipped in with 2 sets before losing out to Lanchester’s Jack Brewis by the smallest of margins (20 – 22, 21 – 19 and 19 – 21).

Sacriston now face St Johns C (Division 3) in a quarter final match – the Saints had a straight forward 9 – 0 victory over Redby CA. Despite the score-line Redby played very well throughout despite having to give their opponents on average a start of between 11 and 13 in each of the sets played.

**Quarter-final draw:**

1. Mortimer CA (D2) vs. Silksworth IM A (D1)
2. Redby CA C or St Gabriels B vs. Silksworth IM B (D2)
3. Sacriston St Bedes A (D2) vs. St John B (D3)
4. Sacriston St Bedes C (D3) vs. St John C (D3)

**\*\*\*Matches to be played w/c 27th February 2012\*\*\***

The results of Week 15 league fixtures will be reported in next week’s Table Tennis column together with up to date league tables.