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**Table tennis notes by Chris Blake**

Thompson Insurance A are the new leaders of **Division 1** following two 10 – 0 wins over Redby CA A and St Gabriels A respectively.

Darren McVitie (see picture attached) was in excellent form and was closely supported by team-mates Chris Blake and Dave Blackburne who were undefeated in both matches. With Manager Allan Thompson and former England junior Andrew Wilkinson starting their comeback following long-term injuries Thompson’s could soon be back to full strength at this vital stage of the season.

Second placed Silksworth IM A had a comfortable 9 – 1 win over lowly Durham CA to move within 7 points of Thompson’s with a game in hand – a maximum of 4 points. Silksworth and Thompson’s still have each other to play before the end of the season – the outcome of this match could eventually decide who is crowned Division 1 champions.

At the bottom end of the table Durham CA’s chances of avoiding the drop were dented following their 7 – 3 defeat to rivals St Gabriels A. George Gibson, Tom Bainbridge and Norman Pescod each won 2 sets a piece - Colin Hunt was undefeated for Durham winning all of his 3 sets.

The final outcome of the match was effectively decided by the 2 sets which went into the 5th end - both of which were won by St Gabriels by the smallest of margins. Firstly, Gibson and Bainbridge edged the doubles set 11 – 9 over Hunt and Gavin Bestford before Saints player Pescod came back from 2 games to 0 down to narrowly defeat Stuart Anderson in an epic game which eventually ended 13 – 11.

**Results:**

Silksworth IM A 9 vs. Durham CA 1

St Gabriels A 7 vs. Durham CA 3

Thompson Insurance A 10 vs. Redby CA A 0

Thompson Insurance A 10 vs. St Gabriels A 0

In **Division 2** in-form Sacriston St Bedes B were held to a 5 – 5 draw to dent their hopes of a top 2 finish and automatic promotion.

Duncan Fraser starred for Sacriston winning all of 3 sets but narrowly lost out in the doubles set with partner Dan Nicholson – losing 9 – 11 in the 4th to Dave Revell and Steve Young. Fraser was well supported by team-mate Nigel Coe who won 2 of his 3 sets.

Steve Young played well for St Gabriels picking up 2 sets, Revell and Mark Burton each won a set.

Sacriston’s Dan Nicholson played well throughout but lost each of his sets by the narrowest of margins.

Silksworth IM B had a fine 7 – 3 win over Redby CA but were forced to fight all the way in a very tight game. Alan Bickle starred for Silksworth winning his 3 sets with Graham Brown(1) and Howard Brown(2) who also partnered Carlyon to win the doubles set to secure the match 7 – 3.

Dave Barber played well for Redby winning 2 sets – but lost out to Bickle 10 – 12 in the 4th.

The battle for automatic promotion appears to be between Sacriston St Bedes A & B and Mortimer CA – with only a handful of games remaining it promises to be a very close finish.

**Results:**

Silksworth IM B 7 vs. Redby CA 3

St Gabriels B 5 vs. Sacriston St Bedes B 5

St Johns B are **Division 3** leaders followed closely by St Johns A – both teams only require 1 victory from their remaining matches to gain automatic promotion.

Lanchester CC had a fine 6 – 4 win over Redby CA to record only their 2nd win of the season. Jack Brewis was man-of-the-match for Lanchester after winning all of his 3 sets – Brewis was closely supported by John Cook who picked up a set. With Lanchester winning the only doubles set and Redby’s Viv Ford conceding a set the final score was 6 – 4.

Sacriston St Bedes D came back from 1 – 4 and 2 – 5 in sets down to draw 5 – 5 in a hard fought draw against St Gabriels C.

**Results:**

Redby CA C 4 vs. Lanchester CC 6

St Gabriels C 5 vs. Sacriston St Bedes D 5

In the **Team Handicap Cup** 3rd division Sacriston St Bedes C are the first team through to the semi-final stage following their 6 – 3 win over St Johns C. Chris Grant gave Sacriston an excellent start with a fine win over St John’s Sean Gleghorn (+5) – after taking the 3rd and deciding end 21 – 16. Lee Maher (who was voted man-of-the-match) doubled Sacriston’s lead with a narrow 21 – 18, 21 – 16 win over Jacob Helm despite giving his opponent a 7 point start.

St John’s pulled back a set when Jake Hannah (+ 10) had a narrow win over Ian McPherson 21 – 13, 17 – 21, 21 – 11 to make the match score 2 sets to 1 to Sacriston.

Lee Maher increased Sacriston’s lead following his narrow 24 – 22 win over Sean Gleghorn having cancelled out the 8 point lead given to his opponent – this win proved to be a critical factor in the final outcome of the match.

St John’s found themselves 4 – 1 down when Hannah (+4) narrowly lost out to Chris Grant – Sacriston now needed only 1 of the remaining 4 sets to book their place in the semi-final.

St John’s pulled a set back to keep the tie alive when Helm (+10) beat McPherson in a close encounter to make the score 4 – 2. However, in the next set Maher, who was in excellent form, ensured victory for Sacriston with a fine 21 – 15, 21 – 19 over Hannah (+7).

This was an excellent cup tie with some very close matches. Sacriston’s Ian McPherson gave each of his opponents a 10 point lead and was extremely unlucky not to pick up a set for his efforts – eventually losing each of his sets in 3rd and deciding end.