**Team Handicap Cup shock results…**

**Table tennis notes by Chris Blake**



With the league fixtures completed for the first half of the season, the teams turned their attention to the 1st round of the Team Handicap Cup.

The cup competition sees players allocated an individual handicap based upon the standard to which they play. This in effect attempts to cancel out any advantage a Division 1 player may have over a player who plays in Division 2 or 3 – 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 the 3 games played to 21 points, with alternative serves (5 serves).

**1st Round Team Handicap Cup Results:**

Silksworth IM A 9 (D1) vs. Redby CA B (D2) 1

Sacriston St Bedes C 8 (D3) vs. Redby CA A (D1) 1

Sacriston St Bedes D 4 (D3) vs. St Johns B (D3) 5

Silksworth IM B 5 (D2) vs. Thompson Insurance A (D1) 3

Durham CA (D1) 3 vs. Thompson Insurance B (D1) 6

St Johns A (D3) 3 vs. Mortimer CA (D2) 6

The match of the week saw Silksworth IM B (lying 3rd in Division 2) play Thompson Insurance A (Division 1 leaders). Despite playing in Division 1 last season the Silksworth players were awarded a handicap of between 9 and 13 points in each of the individual sets played, i.e., 9, 10, 11, 12 or 13 - to the first to 21.

Man of the match was Silksworth’s George Carlyon who turned back the clock and played excellent attacking and controlled table tennis winning all 3 sets against Dave Blackburne, Allan Thompson and Chris Blake (the set which effectively sealed victory and stopped the match going into the 9th and deciding set).

Carlyon was closely supported by Howard Brown who won 2 of his 3 sets against Allan Thompson (21 – 9 and 21 – 10 - having had a 9 point start) and Chris Blake (21 – 15 and 21 – 17 – having had a 12 point start) but was narrowly defeated by Dave Blackburne in an excellent and closely fought game which saw the point of the match – a 15 stroke rally which saw Brown chop a forehand smash from Blackburne 4 metres off the table low over the net to win the point. The final score was 22 – 24 and 25 – 27 to Blackburne with Brown having had an 11 point start.

Alan Bickle (Silksworth) played well and can count himself unlucky not to pick up a set on the night – losing narrowly to Blake (21 – 10, 15 – 21, 17 – 21 – from a 10 point start) and Blackburne (18 – 21 and 15 – 21 – from a 9 point start).

Silksworth can now look forward to a 2nd match against West CA B who also play in Division 2 and are currently lying at the foot of the table.

Another excellent game saw the match between two Division 3 teams – Sacriston St Bedes D and St Johns B. A match that was eventually won 5 sets to 4 by St Johns B. The match ebbed and flowed throughout the night. Sacriston taking a 1 – 0 lead only for St Johns to draw level – this pattern continued until the 8th set. Sacriston were leading 4 – 3 at this point only for Alex Smith (St Johns) to draw level with an excellent win over Nicki Irwin (21 – 23, 21 – 14 and 19 – 21 in the tightest of games – having given his opponent a 10 point start) before Dave Pringle secured a win for St Johns in the 9th and deciding set with a narrow win over Debbie Irwin (Sacriston) 26 – 24 and 21 – 13 – having conceded a 9 point start.

Once again, this was an excellent match with the victors winning by the narrowest of margins in the final set of the game – suggesting the handicap’s set in the match were just right and appropriate.

In the 4 remaining cup fixtures played Thompson Insurance B had an excellent 6 – 3 victory over Durham CA. A match that saw 6 of the sets played being decided in the 3rd game. Shirley Gelder remained undefeated for Thompson’s.

Mortimer CA (lying 2nd in Division 2) had a 6 sets to 3 win over St Johns A who a currently lying top of Division 3. Without doubt the set of the match was the tie between Matty Hampton (Mortimer) and Craig Hilton (St Johns) – which saw Hilton win by the narrowest of margins (12 – 21, 30 – 28 and 21 – 18 – having had to concede 3 points to his opponent.

The remaining 2 fixtures appear on the face of it to be relatively straight forward – which saw Sacriston St Bedes C 8 – 1 winners over Redby CA A and Silksworth IM A 8 – 1 winners over their opponents Redby CA B. However, the matches were far closer than the scores suggest with the majority of sets been decided by the narrowest of margins.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!

\*\*\*Please insert the final league tables as they stand going into the Xmas break\*\*\*