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**Table tennis notes by Chris Blake**

The Sunderland & District table tennis league has reached the business stage of the season where promotion and title hopes and relegation places are starting to emerge or be confirmed.

In Division 1 reigning champions Thompson Insurance A remain in pole position after their 9 – 1 win over Durham CA whilst Silksworth IM A are hot on their heels in second place following their excellent 7 – 3 win over 3rd placed St Chads.

Thompson’s still have Silksworth and St Chads to play so the eventual Champion’s is by no means a foregone conclusion.

At the other end of the table Redby CA A have been relegated to Division 2 following their 1 – 9 defeat to Thompson Insurance B.

With 2 teams going down the final relegation spot appears to be between Durham CA and St Gabriels A.

The Saints have had long-term injury problems for much of the season which has often required them to field only 2 players in matches – this has been the key contributing factor for this season’s lowly position. Durham on the other hand have strengthened their side and have been able to call on the services of Colin Hunt, fast-improving Bill Upton and more recently Christian Neumann to boost their chances of avoiding the drop.

With only 3 points separating the 2 sides and less than a handful of matches remaining it promises to be a very exciting finish to the season.

**Results:**

Durham CA 3 vs. Silksworth IM A 7

Durham CA 10 vs. Redby CA A 0

Redby CA A 1 vs. Thompson Insurance B 9

St Chads 3 vs. Silksworth IM A 7

St Gabriels A 2 vs. St Chads 8

Thompson Insurance A 9 vs. Durham CA 1

In Division 2 Sacriston St Bedes A moved a step closer to promotion following their 9 – 1 win over Redby CA B – a defeat which almost certainly condemns Redby to relegation to the 3rd Division alongside West CA B whose 8 – 2 defeat to Silksworth IM B confirmed their relegation.

Silksworth’s win saw them leap-frog Mortimer CA and Sacriston St Bedes B to move into 2nd place – the 2nd promotion spot is now between Silksworth, Mortimer and Sacriston St Bedes B with Mortimer appearing to have the most realistic chance of sealing the 2nd automatic promotion spot.

**Results:**

Sacriston St Bedes A 9 vs. Redby CA B 1

West CA B 2 vs. Silksworth IM B 8

In **Division 3** it has been an excellent week for St Johns TT club with the A and B sides achieving promotion to Division 2.

The ‘B’ side were able to secure promotion despite being out of action. The ‘A’ team lost 6 – 4 to 3rd placed Sacriston St Bedes C but with only 4 games remaining Sacriston are unable to overhaul the 18 point difference and therefore will have to be content with a probable 3rd place position.

With young Chris Grant, Lee Maher and Ian McPherson to call upon Sacriston can mount a strong promotion challenge next season.

**Results:**

Sacriston St Bedes C 6 vs. St Johns A 4

St Johns A 10 vs. Redby CA C 0

St Johns C 2 vs. St Johns B 8

In the **Team Handicap Cup** 2nd division side Mortimer CA ended 1st division side Silksworth IM A’s hopes of a possible league and cup double with a 5 – 0 victory to book their place in the semi-final stage of the competition.

Silksworth chose to leave out the Barella brothers Anthony and Graeme to maximise their chances of advancing through to the last four but still faced an uphill climb to overcome the handicap allocated to their opponents. It would be an injustice however to dismiss the performances of the Mortimer team.

Dave Cutler (+6) got Mortimer off to an excellent start with a fine win over the experienced Rod Roberts in a close encounter which finished 21 – 18, 21 – 18. Matty Hampton (+11) doubled the lead with a comfortable win over Bernie Morris who found the head start awarded to his opponent a bridge too far.

Ian Morris (+12) made it 3 – 0 following a really close game against Ryan Richardson who played extremely well to win the first game 21 – 19. Morris drew level to take the set into the deciding end before finally just edging the set 21 – 18 to give Mortimer a commanding lead.

In the 4th set Silksworth’s Roberts performed valiantly to take the first end 23 – 21 despite giving his opponent Hampton an 11 point lead but narrowly lost the 2nd end 19 – 21 forcing the set into the deciding end which Hampton won 21 – 13 to make the match score 4 – 0.

Cutler (+9) beat Richardson 21 – 5 in the 3rd end to wrap up the match and book Mortimer’s place in the semi-final.

The Team Handicap Cup semi-final draw has set up some mouth-watering ties with teams from 2 and 3 being guaranteed a spot in the final.

In the first tie 3rd Division leaders St John’s B have been drawn against third placed Sacriston St Bedes C.

The second tie sees 2nd Division rivals Silksworth IM B and Mortimer CA drawn against each other. With the teams currently lying in 2nd and 3rd place respectively it promises to be a very close tie with both teams fancying their chances of booking their place in the final.

**Team Handicap Cup Semi-final draw:**

St John B vs. Sacriston St Bedes C (played 02.04.12)

Mortimer CA vs. Silksworth IM B (played 03.04.12)

***Both semi-finals and Final (Tuesday 10th April) are being held at Silksworth IM Church Hall @ 7.00pm***