**Table tennis by Chris Blake - www.tabletennis365.com/Sunderland**

With 1st Division leaders Thompson Insurance A out of action this week, third placed St Chads were hoping to close the gap on their rivals and by doing so remain in contention for the title.

Wins by Adam Curran (3), Jimmy Scope (3) and Barry Cuthbertson (3) ensured they had a comfortable 9 – 1 win over Sacriston St Bedes A provided the saints with a timely boost and set them up nicely for their second match of the week against Durham CA A - currently lying in runners-up spot.

Despite an excellent unbeaten display by Keith Weatherby (St Chads) including fine wins over Geoff Salter, Colin Hunt and John Williamson, St Chads were unable to topple Durham who eventually ran out 7 – 3 winners to reinforce their 2nd place league position and effectively ending any hopes the saints had on catching leaders Thompson Insurance.

This was a great team effort by Durham and saw Salter, Williamson and Hunt winning 2 sets apiece with the former combining to edge the all-important doubles set coming from 2 games down against Weatherby and Cuthbertson to win 11 – 8 in the 5th to record a maximum points win for their victory.

Thompson’s require just one win from their remaining matches to retain the 1st Division title for the 8th successive season.

In Division 2 North East Bed Centre edged closer to the top flight following a stunning (but perhaps harsh) 9 – 1 win over 2nd placed Sacriston St Bedes B and a 5 – 5 draw against 3rd placed Silksworth IM B.

The victory over Sacriston was not as easy as the game suggests with some very good performances by the Sacriston players – most noteably Chris Grant and Tony Taylor who both provided Dave Pringle and Alex Smith with arguably their hardest games of the season.

Charlie Mouzon provided excellent support to Pringle and Smith by picking up 2 sets – narrowly losing out to Taylor in the 5th having led 9 – 7.

NEBC now require just one more win to guarantee promotion but will be hoping to go on a win the league.

Sacriston St Bedes B recovered well from the earlier defeat to beat Durham CA B 7 – 3 – the defeat leaves Durham in one of the relegation spot and unfortunately the drop now looks likely alongside St Gabriels B who despite putting up an excellent display were only able to register a 5 – 5 over rivals Redby CA A.

This was an excellent game with 6 of the 10 sets being decided in the 5th end and many of the individual games finishing 11 – 8 or more.

Redby’s Frank Booth was man-of-the-match after winning all of his 3 singles sets and combined with partner Malcolm Deneven (1) to edge the doubles set to seal their draw.

Dave Revell and Geoff Young were the pick of the bunch for St Gabriels with each player picking up 2 sets – with Mark Burton winning one of his sets the Saints were at least awarded 2 points for their efforts.

In the only other match to be played in Division 2 West CA A had a fine 6 – 4 win over St John A despite being only able to field 2 players. Rob Kerr played very well throughout to win his 3 singles and combine with teammate Dave Thompson (2) to win the doubles match.

Istvan Soos won the only set for St John’s with a good win over Thompson.

In Division 3 third placed West CA B had a good 9 – 1 win over lowly Lanchester CC – John Cook picking up the only set for losing team with a fine win over Tom Turner.

Whitwham and Redfearne were undefeated for West and combined to win the doubles set – with Turner rallying to win his remaining 2 singles sets West were awarded 4 points for their victory.

Sacriston St Bedes C and D teams played out an excellent hard earned 5 – 5 draw. This was a great effort by both teams with both sets of players playing good table tennis throughout. Ian McPherson was voted man-of-the-match for winning all of his sets for the C team.

Log on to: [www.tabletennis365.com/Sunderland](http://www.tabletennis365.com/Sunderland) for more information.