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

In Division 1 of the Sunderland & District league Thompson Insurance A moved a step closer to retaining their league title with a comfortable 10 – 0 win over the Mortimer CA which sees the Sandancers firmly rooted at the bottom of the division.

Marc Cotton, Chris Blake and Darren McVitie were all unbeaten on the night with manager Allan Thompson teaming up with McVitie to win the doubles against Dave Cutler and Dave Bannon (who played excellent throughout and was unfortunate not to record a set on the night).

The fight to avoid relegation to division 2 continues with Thompson Insurance B recording a fine 6 – 4 win over fellow rivals Sacriston St Bedes A in a very tight and entertaining match.

Maurice Cheek of Thompsons was voted man of the match after winning his 3 singles sets and combining with Shirley Gelder to win the doubles set which in the end proved to be the match winner.

With Gelder and Lynne Herrington both picking up a set each Thompsons secured a hard fought victory.

There were good displays by all 3 Sacriston players and most noteably Ian McAllister who won 2 sets narrowly losing out to Herrington 12 – 10 in the 4th. With Duncan Fraser and Jon Mawson each winning a set Sacriston were at least picked up a point for their defeat.

Thompsons win sees them leapfrog their rivals to move out of the relegation zone – with both teams only having 5 matches each remaining the battle to avoid the drop may well go to the wire.

There was only one match played in Division 2 but it proved to be an important one – Silksworth IM B’s 6 – 4 win over St John A saw them move into 3rd place and pushing rivals West CA A down into 4th.

There was some excellent table tennis played on the night with 2 players in particular worthy of note – Silksworth’s Bob Sanderson (3) and St John’s Craig Hilton (2).

Once again the doubles set proved to be decisive in the match which Silksworth’s Sanderson and Alan Bickle (2) won 3 – 0 over Istvan Soos and Craig Burton (1).

St Johns player Burton had a narrow 11 – 9 (in the 5th) over Graham Sleep to ensure the Saints picked up a point despite their loss and remaining safe in 5th place.

3 matches were played in Division 3 and as expected they all proved to very tight games.

Leaders St Gabriels C dropped 2 points by drawing with 3rd off bottom Sacriston St Bedes C. Ian McPherson played excellent throughout and was voted man of the match for his display and he was closely supported by Dan Hutchinson (1) and Colin Pritchard (1) to help his team secure a hard earned draw.

St Gabriel’s player Syd Gooding won 2 of his 3 sets and combined with teammate Ronnie Douglass to win the doubles set 3 – 0. With Alan Ray also winning up 2 sets the saints at least gained 2 points for their draw and remain favourites for promotion to Division 2.

West CA B had an excellent 6 – 4 win over 2nd placed Redby CA B with some excellent table tennis and battling performances from all of the players. In particular Redby’s Howard Forster who despite not recording a win on the night played excellently throughout which saw him twice come back from 2 games to 0 down to level the games up only to narrowly lose out 11 – 7 and 11 – 9 to West’s Tommy Turner and Vic Austin respectively.

Redby’s Joe Muldowney was unbeaten on the night to record 3 sets and he was supported by Allan Girdwood who beat Austin in straight sets.

The victory by West was a great team effort with each player playing their part. Number 1 player Alan Whitwham won 2 of his 3 sets and teamed up with Austin (1) to narrowly win the doubles – with Turner picking up 2 sets too.

In the other match to be played in Division 3 St John B made up for their early season 4 – 6 defeat to West CA B to win 6 – 4 over their close rivals and by doing so dented their promotion chances.

Saints players Jacob Helm, Robert Renton and Sean Gleghorn won 2 sets each to record their closely fought win. Alan Whitwham (West) performed excellently on the night winning all of his 3 sets and teaming up with Vic Austin to win the doubles set 11 – 7 (in the 5th) which ensured his team picked up a point despite their defeat.

This was a really close and entertaining game with 8 out of the 10 sets being decided in the 4th or 5th ends.

In the Team Handicap Cup St Johns B of division 3 beat 1st division Sacriston St Bedes A 5 – 4 to move into the quarter final stages of the competition.

**Full quarter-final draw of the Team Handicap Cup:**

St John B (D3) vs. St Gabriels B (D2)

Thompson Ins. A (D1) vs. Durham CA A (D1)

Sacriston St Bedes B vs. St Chads (D1)

Silksworth IM A (D1) vs. Sacriston St Bedes C (D3)

**Matches to be played w/c 25th February 2013**

\*\*\*The Sunderland and District Closed TT Championships are being held at the Sandhill Centre on Sunday 3rd March 2013. Entry forms can be obtained from Dave Bissett with the closing date being Wednesday 20th February 2013\*\*\*

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