**Table Tennis by Chris Blake**

As the Sunderland & District table tennis league season draws to a close its time to reflect on the key highlights from each division.

In Division One Thompson Insurance A – represented by Darren McVitie, Andrew Wilkinson, Chris Blake, Marc Cotton, Diane Cartmell and player / manager Allan Thompson – underlined their dominance of the top flight with an 8th consecutive title, having finished the season unbeaten with 15 wins out of 15.

The battle for 2nd place could not have been more closely contested with Durham CA A just pipping St Chads into runners-up spot. Both teams have strength in-depth and the final league positions came down to the match results against each other – with Durham winning 2 of the 3 ties (6 – 4 and 7 – 3) and the Saints winning the remaining fixture 7 – 3.

St Chads can take some comfort after being crowned Team Handicap Cup champions with Saints player Barry Cuthbertson also winning the Singles Handicap domestic competition.

It has been a difficult season with the temporary withdrawal of the ever-present and experienced St Gabriels A side due to personal circumstances and also the mid-season withdrawal of the strong Silksworth IM A team who, unfortunately, were unable to consistently field a full team due largely to the Barella brothers (Anthony and Graeme) being unavailable due to University and work commitments.

The 2 promoted sides Sacriston St Bedes A and Mortimer CA performed valiantly throughout with some of their players recording some excellent individual wins over established top-flight players. Both teams should be proud of their performances despite the relegation fate which potentially awaits them.

In Division 2 North East Bed Centre – as expected - romped the league to finish Champions by an 18 point margin. Dave Pringle and Alex Smith finished the season with 100% records and were well supported by teammates Gary Anderson and Tony Watson.

Congratulations to Sacriston St Bedes B who had an excellent season to finish runners-up ahead of 3rd placed West CA A with Tony Taylor and Chris Grant being identified as their key players.

Silksworth IM B and Redby CA A both had good seasons – finishing in mid-table position.

At the foot of the table St John A have been relegated to Division 3 but the 2nd relegation spot yet to be confirmed. St Gabriels B (currently lying 2nd bottom) can potentially overtake Durham CA B if they manage to record a maximum-points win over St John A in their final match of the season and in doing so they will avoid relegation.

In Division 3 St Gabriels led the league for long periods only to overtaken in the final stages by Redby CA B who were represented by Joe Muldowney (96.3%), Howard Forster, Allan Girdwood and Ian Wilson.

Both teams have previously played in Division 2 before and should give a good account of themselves next season – making for a competitive division.

The fight for 3rd place could not be any closer with the youthful St John B side – represented in the main by Jacob Helm, Sean Gleghorn and Robert Renton – currently just edging West CA B whose players can boast considerable league experience.

The lower division provides the opportunity for younger players to gain some valuable experience and learn their trade – special mentions therefore must go to Dan Nicholson (Sacriston St Bedes C) and Simon Knopf (Sacriston St Bedes D) who have both had excellent season and look like promising future prospects.

Lanchester CC now have a 2nd season under their belts and continue to blood their younger players - hopefully they will come back stronger for the experience as the new season commences.

St John C unfortunately finished the season without a win picking up only a single point for their efforts.

*Finally, on a sombre note, the Sunderland & District TT Association sadly lost one of their most prolific players in April this year when Lynne Bainbridge passed away. Lynne won 11 Ladies singles championships (more than any other player), mixed titles and was awarded Life Membership by the Association in 2005 for her outstanding contribution to the league and sporting achievements – our thoughts continue to be with Lynne’s Husband Tom and family.*

**Division 3 Results:**

Lanchester CC 2 vs. St John B 8

Please note that there a still a handful of scorecards yet to be received and therefore these match results are not yet reflected in the league tables.

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