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

**1st Division** leaders Thompson Insurance A were given a huge title boost when 2nd placed rivals St Chads were beaten 6 – 4 by Durham CA A. Geoff Salter did the damage for Durham winning all of his sets which included a fine win over Saints number 1 player Keith Weatherby – his first defeat of the season. Salter then combined with John Williamson to beat Weatherby / Jimmy Scope in the doubles set.

With Christian Neumann and Williamson picking up a set a piece Durham secured a 6 – 4 victory.

St Chads however did ensure they picked up a point for their defeat with Weatherby (2), Scope (1) and Barry Cuthbertson (1) winning the remaining sets.

Saints player Scope played excellently throughout and was unlucky not to finish the night undefeated losing out twice in the 5th, 10 - 12 to Salter and 5 – 11 to Williamson. Had Scope won this sets the match score would have been reversed – with Saints winning 6 – 4.

Thompson Insurance A took full advantage of St Chads narrow defeat with a hard fought 7 – 3 win over newly promoted Sacriston St Bedes A – a win which sees them move 4 points clear of 2nd placed St Chads. Thompsons were made to fight all the way by Sacriston who can count themselves unlucky not to pick up a point from the match. Chris Blake (Thompsons) came back from 2 - 0 down to Duncan Fraser (Sacriston) to winning the final 3 games to win 3 – 2. This was desperately unlucky on Fraser’s part having played arguably some of the best table tennis of his life only to lose out 8 – 11 in the 5th. Had Fraser managed to hold out Sacriston would have picked up a point from the match result.

Statistically Thompson’s Andrew Wilkinson was man of the match winning his 3 sets and combining with Blake (3) to win the doubles set to ensure Thompsons secured 4 points for their victory. However, the players were unanimous in awarding man of the match to Fraser for his fine performance.

Durham followed up their excellent win over St Chads with a 7 – 3 win over Thompson Insurance B – a win which sees them leapfrog last year’s runners up Silksworth IM A to move into 3rd place, although Silksworth have 2 matches in hand.

In **Division 2** league leaders Sacriston St Bedes B and 2nd placed North East Bed Centre extended their lead over 3rd placed West CA A with 9 – 1 and 7 – 3 wins over Durham CA B and Silksworth IM B respectively.

Struggling St Gabriels B find themselves in unfamiliar territory at the bottom end of the division following 2 defeats against their closest rivals Durham CA B (6 – 4) and Redby CA A (7 – 3) who played a strong experienced side containing Ken Tweedy, Frank Booth and Malcolm Denevan. Saints player Dave Revell finished the night undefeated in an excellent performance which included a 11 – 9 win in the 5th and deciding game against Booth.

**Division 3** leaders Redby CA B had a hard fought win over promotional rivals St Gabriels C. Joe Muldowney (2), Howard Foster (2) and Allan Girdwood (1) did the damage for Redby with the former combing to take the doubles to register an important 6 – 4 win. Syd Gooding was the pick of the bunch for the Saints winning all of his 3 singles sets and with Graham Murden winning a set the Saints at least managed to pick up a point for their troubles.

St Gabriels recovered by beating St John B 7 – 3.

Out of the 3 leagues this division is by far the most wide open with any one of 5 teams in with a chance for promotion to Division 2. With 2 thirds of the season still to go there will be many twists and turns – the key most likely to be the match results between each other.

At the bottom end of the table St Johns C lost 6 – 4 to rivals Lanchester in a very close match that saw 6 out of the 10 sets being decided in the 4th game.

Sacriston St Bedes C were defeated 9 – 1 by St John B in a quite outstanding match. The match score could easily been so different with St Johns winning 6 out of the 7 sets decided in the 5th game.

Sacriston St Bedes D beat their C team 7 – 3 in a hard fought game – as you would expect these sets would be close encounters with only 3 of the 10 sets being decided in 3 games. Nikki Irwin (3) and Debbie Irwin (2) were the pick of the bunch but they were well supported by Terry Charlton who won 1 set and was unlucky to not to win his other sets – losing out 9 – 11 in the 5th and deciding game to Peter Whitfield and Colin Pritchard respectively. Dan Hutchinson continues to gain valuable league experience and was particularly unlucky not to pick up a set on the night – narrowly losing out 9 – 11 in the 5th against Debbie Irwin.

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