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

In the Sunderland & District Table Tennis league 2nd Division leaders North East Bed Centre edged closer to promotion with 7 – 3 and 8 – 2 wins over St Johns A and Sacriston St Bedes respectively - two more wins from their remaining games should be sufficient for NEBC to secure their place into the top flight.

In the match against St John A Dave Pringle (NEBC) was once again voted man-of-the-match after winning all of his single sets and the doubles set with partner Tony Watson without losing a single end during the night.

With teammate Gary Anderson picking up 2 sets and Watson adding another, NEBC were awarded maximum points for their victory. Watson could have won all of his sets but had to be satisfied with only one following two narrow 5th end defeats at the hands of Craig Burton and Craig Hilton who also recorded an excellent win over Anderson in a very close match finally finishing 17 – 15 in the 3rd end.

In their second game leaders NEBC took on their closest rivals Sacriston St Bedes B - currently lying in 2nd place. NEBC were simply too strong for their opponents who picked up only 2 sets on the night which were recorded by Tony Taylor and Chris Grant. Once again young Dan Nicholson played very well for the Saints and is gaining excellent experience week in week out now against strong opposition which is invaluable for his development.

Alex Smith (3), Dave Pringle (3) and Gary Anderson (1) picked up the sets for NEBC with the former teaming up to win the doubles set over Taylor and Grant.

Despite this defeat Sacriston kept their promotion hopes very much alive with a 7 – 3 win over bottom placed St Gabriels B who could only turn out two players – this meant they had to concede 3 sets before the match started. St Gabriels battled hard and saw Dave Revell voted man-of-the-match for winning 2 of his 3 sets - losing only to Tony Taylor in a close game.

St Gabriels have surprisingly managed to win only one game all season and are now 5 points adrift from safety – relegation to Division 3 is now a real possibility.

In the two remaining matches in Division 2, Silksworth IM A and West CA A kept the heat on 2nd placed Sacriston by winning their matches and gaining maximum points for their efforts.

Silksworth had a good 8 – 2 win over Durham with Alan Bickle (3), Howard Brown (2) and Bob Sanderson (1) doing the damage for Silksworth – Brown and Sanderson also combining to win the doubles set in a close encounter against Paul Wiggins and Billy Upton who made up for their defeat by winning a set each in their singles sets against Brown and Sanderson respectively.

West CA A meanwhile had a fine and hard fought win over Redby CA A which saw 7 of the 10 sets played being decided in the 4th or 5th end.

Thomson played outstandingly well to win all of his 3 sets with 2 of these sets being decided in the 5th – most noteably the match against Malcolm Deneven which finished 12 – 10 in Thomson’s favour. With David Barber picking up a set and combining with Thomson to win the doubles and Kishore Sridharan also winning a set West were assured of 3 points for their victory.

Ken Tweedy and Malcolm Deneven won the sets for Redby with Amanda Paxton unlucky not to pick up a set on the night despite playing well against all three West players – most noteably against Thomson when she was narrowly defeated in the 5th.

In the only match played in Division 1, Durham CA A beat bottom placed Mortimer CA 8 – 2 – a win which saw them move above St Chads into 2nd place. The score-line suggests that this was a comfortable win but this was far from the truth with some very close games and excellent table tennis played.

There were 3 sets that went to the 5th and deciding ends – Durham’s Colin Hunt edging his match against Dave Cutler 11 – 9, John Williamson narrowly beating Ian Moore 11 – 7 before Mortimer’s Ian Moore defeated Anderson 11 – 9. Matty Hampton picked up the remaining set for Mortimer.

In Division 3 current leaders St Gabriels C kept their promotion hopes alive with an excellent 7 – 3 win over St John B. This was a quite enthralling match with some very entertaining table tennis played throughout. Game of the night was the match between Alan Ray (St Gabriels) and Jacob Helm which finished 9 – 11, 11 – 13, 13 – 11, 11 – 9 and 13 – 11 in favour of Ray.

Syd Gooding was man-of-the-match for St Gabriels after winning all of his 3 singles sets as did teammate Graham Murden – ensuring the saints gained maximum points for their victory. St John’s won the doubles set and Sean Gleghorn and Robert Renton won a set apiece.

Sacriston St Bedes D had a comfortable 8 – 2 over Lanchester CC who were also earlier beaten by Redby CA B 9 – 1.

The win’s sees Sacriston maintain their 4th place position and keeps Redby in runners-up position and favourites alongside St Gabriels C to gain promotion into Division 2.

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