**High hopes and great expectations**

**Table tennis round-up by Chris Blake**

The **Sunderland & District Table Tennis league** season is finally underway with hopes and expectations running high.



**Division 1**

In division one Thompson Insurance A, winners for the past 7 seasons are looking for a straight 8th title. They have started the season is excellent form winning their first 3 matches. Once again Thompson’s can draw upon former England Junior Andrew Wilkinson (see photo) who missed the vast majority of last season due to a serious knee injury. Wilkinson joins a strong squad containing County Players Darren McVitie, Chris Blake, Marc Cotton and Allan Thompson and a new addition to the squad Diane Cartmell.

St Chads, who fought valiantly last season for the runners up spot before finally having to settle for 3rd spot have started off the season in excellent form – winning their first 4 matches with a fine 6 – 4 victory over last year’s runners up Silksworth IM A in a very entertaining match. Anthony Barella was unbeaten for Silksworth and combined with Bernie Morris to win the only doubles set to ensure that his team gained a point for their defeat.

St Chads have a strong squad which boasts Keith Weatherby, Jimmy Scope, Steve Penman, Dave Bissett and Barry Cuthbertson and will put in a strong challenge for league title.

Newly promoted Sacriston St Bedes A and Mortimer CA have started the season well and have given a good account of themselves. Most notably some excellent individual performances from Ian McAllister (Sacriston) and Dave Cutler (Mortimer).

In division 2 the early pace setters are newly promoted NE Bedding Centre and Sacriston St Bedes B – both sides have had an excellent start and are unbeaten. Both teams have strength in depth and will be looking to mount a sustained challenge to gain promotion into Division 1.

They are joined by Redby CA A who were relegated from Division 1 last year but have a wealth of experience and are more than capable of pushing for promotion back into the top division.

The Division 3 league is wide open with any one of 3 teams more than capable of pushing for promotion. Redby CA B, West CA B and Sacriston St Bedes D have all started the season particularly well – with Redby winning all of their matches and maybe will be the team to beat as the season unfolds.

Of course, there will be many twists and turns as the season unfolds – who will be victorious remains to be seen – **good luck everyone!!!**