

Baker hoping for relaxing finish

BY TOM BODELL

Harrow Borough boss Steve Baker says he is simply targeting being able to enjoy a game before the end of the season after the Reds moved three points clear of the drop zone.

A last-gasp 1-0 win at Lewes on Saturday was built upon by a hard-fought 2-2 draw at home to Metropolitan Police on Bank Holiday Monday, leaving 19th-placed Boro in a position of relative strength in the Isthmian Premier Division with three games left to play.

And whilst Baker knows the job is far from complete, he is hoping to take charge of one pressure-free fixture before the season is out.

He said: "I just hope we are in the position where we are able to enjoy it for one those games.

"I know the last few years Harrow were flirting with relegation on and off. If we can keep who we want to keep and add who we want to add then next season can be positive.

"But for now the sole focus is on this season. You can't think past the next game.

"When I first came in we were looking at where we needed to get to.

"The table is the first thing you look at in the morning and the last thing you look at at night, so my misus must be delighted at the moment," joked Baker.

It has been a remarkable run of form which has seen the former Chipstead boss drag the Reds out of the relegation zone, with Boro looking nailed-on for the drop under predecessor Dave Anderson.

Twice coming from behind to draw with Met Police was another positive step, with goals from Spencer McCall and Lewis Driver ensuring a share of the spoils.

Reflecting on a hard-fought draw, Baker mused: "It was a good point. Prior to the weekend I would have taken four points.

"Both sides looked quite tired having played on Saturday. We showed a good attitude to come back from behind twice.

"It was important we got both goals back quite quick. At 2-1 I thought we would be in a bit of trouble if we did not get one back."

He continued: "It is a little bit of belief you get when you go on an unbeaten run – you do not expect to lose.

"It is just confidence, if you have got that and a bit of belief you have always got a chance."

It was a far from ideal start at Earlsmead on Monday as Harrow fell behind to a header from Rob Bartley after just 13 minutes.

However, Harrow levelled six minutes later when Driver brought the ball down and fired in a low cross which was converted by McCall – his first goal for the club.

Harrow continued to ask questions of the visitors' defence with Kamaron English going close and an ill-advised backpass from Nikki Ahamed testing Met goalkeeper Stuart Searle.

With 14 minutes to play the Met retook the lead, a cross from the left controlled by Mu Mann who subsequently turned past Nick Jupp.

Once more, though, it did not take



Harrow celebrate George McCluskey's dramatic winner at Lewes on Saturday.

Picture: Bruce Viveash

Harrow long to pull level.

Josh Webb's free-kick falling at the feet of Driver, who reacted quickest to level for Harrow just two minutes later.

Baker set a target of 50 points to stay up when he arrived at Earlsmead but such is the intensity of the battle to avoid the drop this season, it might yet prove to not be enough.

"The message to the players is to try to win every game," he explained. "If we win at Bury Town on Saturday that would be 50 points but the other teams below us could all win too."

Not that Baker is expecting the relegated Rams to make life easy for his side.

"It will be a tough game, they beat Leiston on Saturday and although

you look at where they are and everyone would say we should go there and win, there is no pressure on them.

"The pressure will be on us which makes it hard.

"But if we go there and perform to the level we have since I have arrived, there is no reason we can't win."

Harrow travel to Bury Town on Saturday.

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Stones begin McGleish talks

Wealdstone boss Gordon Bartlett hopes to retain Scott McGleish for next season but is unsure whether the veteran forward will remain at Grosvenor Vale.

The former Leyton Orient and Bristol Rovers goal-getter scored his tenth goal of the season in Saturday's crushing 4-1 Conference South win over Farnborough and has played an important role this term as the Stones established themselves at a higher level following promotion.

Asked if there had been any discussions about extending the veteran hitman's stay in HA4, Bartlett was coy.

"I have had a chat with Scott. We have brought him onto the coaching staff this year and he has perhaps not had as many starts as he would like.

"It is all very amicable and it is important for Scott to make the right decision for him, as it is with all players.

"We are still discussing it and I know Scott has thoroughly enjoyed his time with us and we would all like to extend it."

Bartlett added: "He would be an important player next season if he were to stay."



Picture: Steve Foster

The Stones were unable to build on Saturday's victory over Farnborough on Monday as they lost out 1-0 to big-spending Ebbsfleet United at Grosvenor Vale.

Bartlett's side were not helped by the controversial dismissal of striker Jefferson Louis, who had scored a hat-trick in the trouncing of the Yellows two days earlier.

The experienced forward was shown a straight red card for an alleged elbow on Ebbsfleet defender Matt Fish but Bartlett refused to be drawn on the referee's call.

Reflecting on defeat against the Fleet, Bartlett mused: "I think it shows how far we have come that we were disappointed to go down 1-0.

"We pitted our wits against a side where one of their players was earning not far away from our entire staff," added Bartlett.

Wealdstone have frequently set up with just one striker away from home this season with Bartlett preferring to use two forwards for home games.

And that system has been responsible for a record of just one defeat in Wealdstone's last 11 away fixtures.

However, Bartlett elected to tweak the side for the visit of Jamie Day's side on Monday.

He explained: "The way we have set up away from home has been a little bit different.

"This Monday we set up a little differently at home and ended up losing 1-0.

"I think we would have been in the play-offs if we had a home record like we do away.

"I can't put my finger on why we have not done so well at home other than teams coming here are keeping it tight and inviting us to break them down."

Stones host Whitehawk on Saturday.

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