

Boro survive on final day

BY TOM BODELL

Harrow Borough secured their Isthmian Premier Division place on Saturday and boss Steve Baker has stressed they must avoid complacency next season.

The Reds have lost just three games from 15 in the league since Baker succeeded Dave Anderson, form which would see them far higher up the table if replicated over the course of a full term.

Marc Charles-Smith's first-half goal sealed a 1-0 win over Leatherhead and the Reds' place in the Premier Division for another year.

And Baker is all-too-aware of the pitfalls of over confidence.

He said: "If you were to go on the final eight games of the form table are second. But we won't be over confident coming back next season because it will be a different challenge.

"The challenge is adding the players we want and keeping the guys we want," explained Baker.

"It is very similar to my time at Chipstead. They were second bottom and finished on a similar run to Harrow and then won eight out of nine at the start of this season.

"But that can't last forever and you have to ensure you keep everyone on their toes."

With just 25 points from 31 games prior to his arrival, Baker has overseen a haul of 28 points from just 15 league games.

And reflecting on the achievement, he enthused: "Obviously everyone was delighted on Saturday – it was a feeling of relief.



Harrow Borough players embrace after securing their survival.

Picture by Bruce Viveash

"You still always had that niggle that it could have gone wrong but it didn't, so it is just massive relief.

"I am usually more nervous away from it all," explained Baker. "Once you get to the game you can't be because otherwise it transmits to the players.

"The team talk was no different to any other since I have been here

because every game has been a must win for us."

Skipper Charles-Smith got the game's only goal after 27 minutes, netting from close range against his former employers.

But goalkeeper Nick Jupp shared hero honours with the goalscorer after saving a second-half penalty from Vas Karagiannis to preserve an

invaluable three points.

Boro finish the season in 16th – five points clear of the relegation zone – and attention now turns to their Middlesex County Cup final against Hanwell Town on Saturday, May 9.

Harrow's Middlesex Charity Cup final against Enfield Town Under-21s has been postponed after the Towners fielded an ineligible player.

Bessborough exit Royal London Championship

Despite a sublime century from Kushal Patel Bessborough fell at the first hurdle of the Royal London Club Championship, losing a close encounter with Harpenden on Sunday.

Visitors Harpenden won the toss and elected to bat first but Jay Chavda (two for 59) made the most of the conditions to take two early wickets.

And the away side were in a spot of bother at 45 for three.

But an excellent 96-run partnership between skipper Jake Pankhurst (94) and wicket keeper Harry Josephs (40) followed to help boost the Harpenden score to 141.

Two for 18 from vice-captain Sahil Hathi helped slow the pace and a remarkable final over saw Gihan Pallage finish with figures of four for 33 as Harpenden closed on 235 for nine.

Patel hit a stunning 128 in reply and alongside Ishan Shah (7) helped put on 34 before the latter departed.

Shiv Patel (5) was also short-lived at the crease but the pairing of Patel and Chavda (23) helped moved the score along for Bessborough.

Following the exit of Chavda, Bessborough struggled to put together lasting partnerships.

However, for as long as Kushal remained at the crease they were still in the game.

Needing roughly seven-and-a-half runs per over heading into the final ten, the home side fell 13 runs short of the chase, ending on 222 for eight from 45 overs.

The firsts lost a friendly to Old Actonians by 16 runs on Saturday, whilst the seconds were crushed by 180 runs by the same side.

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