

PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE



SATURDAY EVENING E-NEWSPAPER

Saturday 19 April 2025

EASTER ACTION



The first part of the Easter weekend has provided plenty of action across all four of our divisions.

In the Pitching In Southern League Premier South, Merthyr Town have one hand on the title after their 3-0 away win at Sholing combined with AFC Totton's goalless draw at relegation-threatened, Basingstoke Town left the Welsh outfit six points clear with two to play.

Walton & Hersham strengthened their position in third place by beating Plymouth Parkway 2-0, whilst Gloucester City went goal crazy as they triumphed 7-0 over already-relegated Marlow. The battle for the last play-off place is hotting up with Dorchester Town leaving it late to win 3-2 at Frome Town to stay a point ahead of Havant & Waterlooville who were commanding winners against Bracknell Town.

Over in the Pitching In Southern League Premier Central, Bedford Town continue to lead the way after battling out a 2-1 victory over Stratford Town, whilst just behind them, Kettering Town had it equally as tough against Royston Town, emerging 1-0 winners.

Both AFC Telford United and Halesowen Town have secured their play-off spots following big wins as Stamford AFC hold the last place following a 2-0 triumph over Banbury United.

The Pitching In Southern League Division One South sees Evesham United remain top on goal difference. They had to be patient to break down Didcot Town but ended up running out commanding 3-0 winners after Yate Town had come from behind to secure a 4-2 triumph over relegated Cinderford Town on Good Friday.

Behind them, Bishops Cleeve were frustrated as they came home with a point from a goalless draw at Thatcham Town, whilst Mousehole were well beaten by four goals to one at Bideford AFC. The impressive form of Malvern Town continues as they hold the final play-off spot following victory over Westbury United. They are holding off the challenge of Bemerton Heath Harlequins and Exmouth Town who both had solid wins.

In the relegation zone, Helston Athletic picked up an important win as they live to fight another day.

The top two are decided in the Pitching In Southern League Division One Central, whilst below Real Bedford and Berkhamsted, Flackwell Heath had a big 2-1 away win at Thame United, who now slip out of the top five behind Barton Rovers, who were held to a home draw by Enfield, and Hadley who triumphed 2-0 at Aylesbury United.

At the bottom, one relegation spot is yet to be decided.

REPORTS FROM ALL GAMES | STATS | FEATURES



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PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER SOUTH

Basingstoke Town 0 AFC Totton 0 (played Friday)

With so much riding on this game for both teams, it was a nervy affair. There were chances at both ends but neither team were able to make the breakthrough with resolute defending and smart saves as it ended in stalemate with the spoils shared.

Frome Town 2 Dorchester Town 3 (played Friday)

A penalty just before the half-hour mark from Olaf Konzela put the away team ahead.

Parity was restored when Albie Hopkins found the net with just over five minutes remaining in the opening period.

On the stroke of half-time, another spot-kick was converted by Konzela put the visitors back in front but that was cancelled out with 20 minutes to go by Sam Teale.

The game swung back in favour of the visitors as Brett Pitman scored two minutes from time before he received a red card in stoppage time as he side saw out the victory.

Gloucester City 7 Marlow 0 (played Friday)

There was an early opener from Joe Hanks for the hosts to set them on their way before Dan Ball doubled the lead soon afterwards.

It was 3-0 on the quarter-hour mark as Elis Watts added his name to the scoresheet and then Harry Pinchard weighed in with a fourth on 28 minutes.

Right on half-time, Ed Williams added a fifth goal and Dayle Grubb a sixth to complete a dominant first half display from the home side.

Midway through the second half, Grubb further added to the lead with his second of the afternoon and that was to be the end of the scoring on what was to prove to be a good Friday for the hosts.

Hungerford Town 1 Wimborne Town 1 (played Friday)

After a goalless opening period, it didn't take the home side long after the restart to get their noses in front when Kyle Tooze found the net.

As the clock ticked down, Will Fletcher equalised for the visitors to earn them a share of the spoils.

Poole Town 4 Swindon Supermarine 0 (played Friday)

A goal on the half-hour mark from Kristian Campbell put the home side ahead and then the same player doubled the lead early in the second period.

On 76 minutes the hosts added to their advantage when Selim Saied got his name on the scoresheet and he rounded things off at the death with a fourth goal to confirm three big points.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER SOUTH

Sholing 0 Merthyr Town 3 (played Friday)

The deadlock was broken in the 12th minute as Cole Jarvis found the net for the visitors and then Tom Handley doubled the advantage ten minutes from the break. As the clock ticked down, Kane Simpson weighed in with a third goal for the away team to earn them the points and push them a step closer to taking the title.

Hanwell Town 0 Taunton Town 2

First blood went to the away team on the half-hour mark as the evergreen Chris Zebroski edged them in front. The home side saw Dwayne Duncan dismissed ten minutes into the second half and then Callum Woodcock followed him into an early bath seven minutes from time.

The victory was rounded off by the away side with a goal from Owen Brain in the final minute as he found the net with an intelligent finish.

Havant & Waterlooville 3 Bracknell Town 0

With 25 minutes gone here, George Milner-Smith struck to put the hosts ahead before top scorer, Ryan Seager, got in on the act with a goal five minutes from the break and then another at the death. The home side were able to see this one out without too many problems in the second half.



Tiverton Town 2 Gosport Borough 0

The opening goal fell to the home side midway through the first half as Daniel Koita beat the 'keeper.

It was the same player who extended the home team's lead in the final quarter-of-an-hour and it secured a deserved three points in their fight to avoid the drop.

Walton & Hersham 2 Plymouth Parkway 0

The home side were set on their way by Johl Powell who broke the deadlock with ten minutes on the clock.

There were ten minutes gone in the second period when Powell repeated his feat to give his side a 2-0 advantage and that's how it remained.

Winchester City 4 Chertsey Town 1

It was lucky seven for the hosts when Jamie Barron fired them ahead in the seventh minute, but Jack Mazzone brought the scores level just after quarter-hour mark.

The early exchanges of the second half saw Tom Wright put the home side back in front as Simbarashe Mlambo quickly made it 3-1.

The home side were playing with real purpose and further extended their advantage as Wright notched his second.

That blitz early in the second period was enough to earn the hosts a big three points in their battle to avoid the relegation zone.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER CENTRAL

AFC Telford United 7 Lowestoft Town 1 (played Friday)

It was the hosts who burst out of the blocks to take the lead within the opening minute through Matty Stenson. There were 2-0 minutes on the clock when Dylan Allen-Hadley struck to double the lead for the home team.

A second from Stenson extended the lead midway through the first half and his hat-trick goal wasn't too far behind.

There was a lengthy stoppage in play when visiting goalkeeper, Warren Burwood, was knocked unconscious in an accidental collision. Thankfully after medical attention, he regained consciousness before being taken to hospital.

The visitors pulled a goal back through Travis Cole but it wasn't long before Stenson added to his tally on the stroke of half-time.

After the break, Stenson weighed in with his fifth goal of the game to make it 6-1 and then Byron Moore rounded the scoring off towards the end with a seventh goal.



Alvechurch 4 Hitchin Town 1 (played Friday)

Just past the quarter-hour mark, Callum Sullivan, was on target to give the hosts the lead and it became 2-0 midway through the opening period courtesy of Kieran Wakefield.

The visitors were given a lifeline as the interval approached when Lewis Franklin was able to pull a goal back, however Archie Crowther restored the two-goal advantage in first half stoppage time.

Early in the second half, the visitors' cause was not helped by Harry Titchmarsh getting his marching orders and with 15 minutes to go, a penalty from Wakefield added to the hosts lead as they secured a deserved victory.

Barwell 0 Stourbridge 2 (played Friday)

The visitors took the lead with 17 minutes on the clock when Archie Kirton fired home.

A second goal arrived just before the half-hour mark as Alex Bradley fired home from the penalty spot.

After the break, the home side were unable to find a way back into the game as the away team saw it out to take the points home with them.

Bromsgrove Sporting 3 Biggleswade Town 0 (played Friday)

The home side wasted little time in taking the lead when James Meddows found the net.

With an hour on the clock, the advantage was doubled courtesy of Theo Robinson and the same player went on to grab another to seal the victory with just under quarter-of-an-hour to go as the home side claimed a deserved three points.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE PREMIER CENTRAL

Redditch United 0 Harborough Town 1 (played Friday)

It was first blood to the play-off chasing visitors when Ben Stephens put them ahead just past the half-hour mark. There was no further addition to the scoring here in this clash that had an impact at both ends of the table.

AFC Sudbury 0 Spalding United 0

This game was very much in the balance when Abduramane Sano Sani saw red for the away team midway through the second period.

In what was an edgy affair with plenty riding on it for both teams, it ended with the spoils shared from this goalless stalemate.

Bedford Town 2 Stratford Town 1

It was advantage to the hosts on ten minutes thanks to leading scorer, Leon Lobjoit, and then Ed Panter doubled the lead with 20 minutes on the clock.

Dan Lafferty threw the away team a lifeline when he pulled a goal back midway through the second half, but try as they might, it ended in victory for the home team in their quest for the title.

Kettering Town 1 Royston Town 0

The home side were finally able to break the deadlock five minutes from the break courtesy of Jamar Loza.

This was to prove to be the deciding moment in what was a hard-fought affair here.

Leiston 0 Halesowen Town 3

Ten minutes from the break and Reece Flanagan struck to give the away team the advantage and then Conor Tee settled visiting nerves with a second goal just before the hour-mark.

A penalty from Tee further increased the away team's lead as they secured a deserved three points.

St Ives Town 1 Bishop's Cleeve 1

A goal from Brad Russell handed the initiative to the away side as the interval loomed.

A red card for Fabio Virciglio ten minutes into the second half meant that the visitors had to try and hold on to their lead with a man less.

The equaliser came within the closing 15 minutes from Habib Makanjuola and that's how it finished, with honours even.

Stamford 2 Banbury United 0

After a goalless opening period where the visitors displayed the resolute defending that has been the hallmark of their season, the deadlock was finally broken early in the second half when Kai Sanchez-Tonge put the hosts ahead.

The home team had their opponents licked when Sanchez-Tonge grabbed another goal to increase their lead and it was enough to secure the victory.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE SOUTH

Yate Town 4 Cinderford Town 2 (played Friday)

There was an opening goal for the visitors here when Dale Evans gave them the lead on eight minutes.

The hosts hit back through the evergreen Marlon Jackson who levelled the scores midway through the first half and then turned the scoreline on its head from the penalty spot just before the half-hour mark.

With ten minutes to go until the interval, Joe Guest added a third goal for the home team but Marley Thomas pulled one back in first half stoppage time.

A goal from Lucas Tomlinson restored a two-goal cushion for the home team who were able to return to winning ways.

Bemerton Heath Harlequins 4 Shaftesbury 1

The home side broke the deadlock within the opening couple of minutes through Ronan Clancy but it was soon cancelled out by Leighton Thomas.

The crazy start continued when Seung Yang put the hosts back in front for the third goal in the opening five minutes.

With the home side finding their flow, Brad Waters added a third goal on 18 minutes. It wasn't until the opening exchanges of the second half that the next goal arrived as Brandon Mundy further increased the home lead as they ran out worthy winners.

Bideford AFC 4 Mousehole 1

A goal from Jack Winsor set the home team on their way with just over ten minutes to go until the interval.

Parity was restored right on the stroke of half-time as Mohamed Konte found the net.

The second half started with Finn Roberts putting the hosts back in front and with them playing with freedom having secured their status at this level last weekend, Jordan Ewing added a third midway through the second period.

As the clock ticked down, Josh Webber made it 4-1 to complete a deserved win for the hosts.

Cribbs 0 Exmouth Town 3

The visitors drew first blood when Jack Thorne opened the scoring in the third minute and then Ace High made it 2-0 on the 20-minute mark.

The hosts cause was not helped by a red card for Sonny Harnett-Balkwill just before half-time as Louis Morison added to the lead for the away team.

It proved to be a commanding success for the visitors as their play-off push stays alive.

Evesham United 3 Didcot Town 0

This was a cagey affair until Reegan Messenger delivered the opening goal for the title-chasing hosts with almost an hour on the clock.

Soon afterwards, Jordy N'Gathe settled the nerves when he weighed in with a second goal and then Lewis Middleton added further gloss with a third goal in stoppage time.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE SOUTH

Falmouth Town AFC 1 Bristol Manor Farm 1

Midway through the opening period, Oliver Evans put the hosts ahead here, but it was cancelled out by Owen Howe's effort ten minutes into the second half.

With just under 20 minutes to go, Louis Smith was sent off for the visitors but they were able to hold on to their point.

Helston Athletic 2 Tavistock AFC 1

The opening goal went to the hosts after 30 minutes as Jacob Smith was able to turn the ball home before Liam Eddy doubled the lead soon afterwards.

The day got worse for the visitors when Luke Mortimore saw red early in the second half to make their task even more tricky.

With just under 15 minutes to go, Liam Pryn made it an interesting ending to the game as he pulled a goal back, but the home team held on to secure a much-needed return to winning ways.

Larkhall Athletic 1 Willand Rovers 1

A penalty from Douglas Camilo at the very end of the opening period saw the away side get in front.

It took a stoppage time strike from Max Williams to level matters as the spoils were shared here.

Malvern Town 3 Westbury United 0

It was the hosts who got their noses in front thanks to Joe Bullock in the opening exchanges before Sam Clark doubled their lead just past the half-hour mark.

First half stoppage time saw Jack Watts put the hosts in command with a third goal and whilst there was no further scoring after the break, this was a commanding triumph for the home side as their unbeaten run continues.

Melksham Town 4 Bashley 0

The home side broke the deadlock when Henry Sady was able to find the net within the opening exchanges, beating experienced front-man, Brett Williams, who started in goal for the visitors.

The afternoon became even tougher for the away team when Lewis Waterfield was sent off after just 13 minutes of play and then Elliot Haffenden doubled the lead.

As half-time approached, Sady added a third goal and then Dawid Regula hit another after the restart, which proved to be the last of the afternoon as the hosts won convincingly.

Thatcham Town 0 Bishops Cleeve 0

Both teams cancelled each other out here as the visitors were frustrated in their efforts to breach what was a well-organised and resolute home defence.

In the end, the points were shared.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL

Hertford Town 0 Leverstock Green 1 (played Friday)

The opening action saw player-manager, Ben Herd, sent off for the hosts and the away team took advantage five minutes later when Rawn Seale gave them the lead.

It was a lead that they were able to hold on to as they secured an important three points in their battle against relegation.

Kings Langley 2 Berkhamsted 2 (played Friday)

First blood to the home side here as Eduard Toiny-Pendred found the net for the home side in the opening exchanges. A second goal from Toiny-Pendred on the stroke of half-time gave the hosts a two-goal advantage going into the second period.

The second half was only four minutes old when JJ Lacey reduced the arrears.

A late red card for Henry Burt for the hosts made it a nervy ending for the home side and they succumbed to a Bernard Christie equaliser in the final minute as it ended with honours even, enough for the visitors to confirm second place.



AFC Dunstable 2 Kidlington 0

With no goals to report, the first action came when the visitors were reduced to ten men with just under 30 minutes to go as Zarius Edwards-Giraud was dismissed.

The hosts soon took advantage when Simone Troso fired them in front before Levi Nicholson doubled the advantage at the death to secure the points.

Aylesbury United 0 Hadley 2

As the half-hour mark approached, Caoilan Mcgettigan put the away team ahead and it was the same player who was able to extend the lead just five minutes into the second half.

There was no further scoring as the visitors took home a big three points in their bid to make the play-offs.

Barton Rovers 1 Enfield 1

We had to wait until almost the hour-mark for the first goal here and it went to the home side as Albie Hall found the net.

Into the final ten minutes and Jack Taylor brought the sides back level and that's how it remained with a point apiece.



PITCHING IN SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE CENTRAL

Leighton Town 1 Real Bedford 4

The Champions opened the scoring just before the half-hour mark when Drew Richardson was able to find the net. But the lead didn't last long as Godlove Oppong was on hand to level matters. The game swung back in favour of the away team when Joey Evans added to his tally on 77 minutes and then Ben Stevens joined the party with a third goal before a late Archie Jones strike completed the win.

North Leigh 1 Northwood 4

The opening goal came on seven minutes when Troy Perez-Duah continued his recent scoring streak to give the away team the lead.

It didn't take long for parity to be restored when Samuel Olawale found the net for the hosts, however, just minutes later Rio Connell restored the visitors' lead.

A penalty from Samuel Folarin increased the visitors' advantage on the half-hour mark and then Connell added a fourth with his second of the afternoon to complete a commanding away win.

Stotfold 3 Biggleswade FC 4

The visitors got their noses in front when Lawrence Marsh was in the right place at the right time to find the net with just over ten minutes remaining of the opening period.

The lead didn't last long, though, as Remell Stirling popped up to equalise shortly afterwards.

In first half stoppage time, the pendulum swung back in favour of the away team as Temilola Akinbusoye scored.

It wasn't long after the restart that Rafal Wielblad added another for the visitors but it brought the home side back to life as Haroon Meriai pulled a goal back.

On 66 minutes, Kymani Skyers made it 4-2 to the visitors but the hosts refused to lie down as Sterling pulled another goal back, but they were unable to find a leveller as the visitors held on to their lead in what was an entertaining encounter.

Thame United 1 Flackwell Heath 2

A goal for the visitors from Michael Harding on the quarter-hour mark set them on their way.

As the hosts searched for a way back into the game, they had Greg Hackett dismissed late on as Louis Walsh added to the misery by notching a second for the away team.

Despite a goal back from Tyrone Lewthwaite, it proved to be too little, too late for his team.

Welwyn Garden City 0 Ware 2

There was half-an-hour on the clock when the away team opened the scoring courtesy of Theophilus Ofori.

The visitors were able to fashion a second goal with 15 minutes to go when Gucci Soulya-Osekanongo beat the 'keeper and wrapped up an away win.



NEWS ROUND-UP

LEISTON | HIGHS AND LOWS

Football can have a habit of lifting you up and then bringing you crashing back down again.

Take Leiston goalkeeper, Billy Johnson, for example. For a few days, he was an internet sensation as his stoppage time scissor-kick drew his side level in the Suffolk Premier Cup Final.

The goal went viral and drew much-deserved praise from all over. But then last weekend, the talented custodian was sent off in first half stoppage time as his side went down to a 2-0 defeat at Stourbridge in the Pitching In Southern League Premier Central.

"That's the lot of a goalkeeper, you can go from hero to zero pretty quickly," he told us. "The goal was crazy! I've been up for a few corners this season and got close to a couple, but never made contact.

"This time I couldn't believe it when my right foot connected with the ball as I was flying through the air and then to see the ball hit the back of the net was an incredible feeling. I've never scored a competitive goal before, so that was a good way to start!

"The attention was mental; I had my 15 minutes of fame and it was fun with Sky Sports and BBC Sport covering the goal and sharing.

"Of course, it was a different story at the weekend with the red card and defeat at Stourbridge, but that doesn't define what has been an exciting season for us.

"The season started slowly, but then we found some form during the midway point to put ourselves into play-off contention.

"We've struggled for form over the past month or so as the pitches have become so dry that we are unable to play our usual good football, but we're looking to finish on a high in these final three games, which start on Saturday against a Halesowen Town side that are in the hunt for promotion.

"We're six points off the play-off places now with three to go, so a top five finish would require us winning all of our games and then relying on others, but you never know!

"This League is great. Every week brings a new challenge, there's always unexpected results and you are kept on your toes throughout. What more could you ask for?"

Having hosted Halesowen Town earlier today, they head to Lowestoft Town on Bank Holiday Monday before rounding things off at home to already-relegated Biggleswade Town on the final day of the season.



BIDEFORD AFC | FIRE IN HIS BELLY

Bideford AFC defender, Alex Byrne, has never been one to shirk a challenge, be that on or off the pitch.

So, when his dad was diagnosed with Parkinson's, he decided to set about raising funds for the Parkinson's UK Charity, who have worked tirelessly for many years to provide life-changing support services for sufferers and their families, as well as funding research into ground-breaking new treatments and campaigning for better health and care in a bid to improve lives of those with the disease and their loved ones.

"As a family we've had tremendous help and support from the Parkinson's UK Charity since dad got his diagnosis," Alex told us. "They do fantastic work and we desperately want to help with the fund-raising effort, so dad and I decided that we'd run the 2025 London Marathon on behalf of the charity.

"Now I wouldn't consider myself a runner – and probably those who have seen me play would agree! Other than football, I've never run further than 10k, so to complete the 42.1k, or 26.2 miles, is going to be a challenge, that's for sure, but it's one that we are more determined than ever to get over the line.

"Training has been tough and gruelling; with my football and family commitments, there have been a lot of long nights and sore days!

"Dad, as has always been the case, has been my inspiration. He's a very good distance runner and I just hope that I've done enough to be able to keep up with him so that we can cross the finishing line together. I know that I will be hanging on come the end!

"At this moment in time, I will just be happy to finish, but if I can complete in under five hours, that would be an achievement.

"We're about halfway through the £2,500 fundraising target, so there's still a bit to go. Once the season has finished we may organise a charity football game to add to the fund-raising pot and provide a good day for everyone.

"We just want to raise as much as we can for this brilliant charity so that others in a similar situation to us can be helped and also there can be better research for future care and treatments for this disease."

Despite losing to a late goal in a 3-2 defeat at Thatcham Town on Tuesday evening, the Devon outfit have already secured their Pitching In Southern League Division One South status for another season, but Byrne admits that the campaign has been a mixed bag.

"We've left a lot of points out there, conceding too many late goals and not taking chances," he added. "There's no doubt that we have a good team here and in spells throughout the season we've played some great attacking football.

"Recent results have helped to steer us away from the bottom four and a few more over these final three games would be nice so that we can end the season on a high.

"There have been a number of changes amongst the playing staff this season with some of the old guard moving on. Being one of the older heads now, I try to help the younger lads that are coming up and it's been a good challenge.

"It's been a tough League this year; everyone has proved that they are capable of beating each other and with four going down, the second half of the season has been something of a dogfight, but we've dug-in and now we're looking to end the season with a few positive results."

A home game against play-off hopefuls, Mousehole, took place today before they head to Devon rivals, Willand Rovers, on Bank Holiday Monday. The season ends at home to Westbury United.

If you would like to make a donation to Alex Byrne's fund-raising effort on behalf of Parkinson's UK, you can do so via the QR Code here.

The Southern League would like to wish Alex and his dad all of the best when they take part in the 2025 London Marathon on Sunday, April 27th.



INFLUENCER

We find out which players most influenced our Pitching In Southern League stars...

JOE HANKS (GLOUCESTER CITY) > ALAN SMITH

I'm a big Leeds United fan (my dad's fault) and Alan Smith was the player I used to really enjoy watching and would try to emulate.

REAL BEDFORD | TITLE TRIUMPH

The first of our four League titles was won at the weekend when Real Bedford confirmed the Pitching In Southern League Division One Central crown with three games still to play.

They had to work hard to get their 30th victory of the season as a first half penalty from leading scorer, Joey Evans, was enough to beat Kings Langley to put them 11 points clear of nearest challengers, Berkhamsted. It's been a campaign that has seen them lose on just two occasions from 37 League games, during which time they have scored an impressive 120 goals whilst conceding only 30.

Watched by a crowd of almost 1,500, including American investors, Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, it was a special day for the club as they celebrated a third championship triumph in a row having lifted the Spartan South Midlands League Division One and Premier Division titles at the end of each of the previous two seasons.

"I am extremely proud to be part of this story," skipper, Lee Watkins, told us. "I've led teams in the past, but to have captained a side this good and talented has been a real privilege.

"There have been plenty of key moments along the way. I think back to scrappy 1-0 away wins at the likes of Flackwell Heath and AFC Dunstable. The home game against Flackwell Heath was another one where we managed to get a massive point having found a way back from 5-3 down with ten men against strong opponents.

"From a team perspective, we have done what we set out to do at the start of the season, but not only that, we've done it by sticking to our principles and our style of play.

"I've played in this League a few times in the past, so generally I had an idea of what to expect going into the campaign. This is such a competitive League and you can see that by the number of teams who have been battling it out for a place in the play-offs.

"There are still plenty of targets for us over the final three games. We want to get to 100 points and +100 goal difference. We're 19 games unbeaten in the League and if we can continue that to the end of the season, it would be a great achievement for everyone involved here."

Manager, Rob Sinclair, who has guided the club to each of their title successes, added: "It's incredible; you only have to look at the celebrations over the weekend to see how much this means to everyone.

"I'm really proud of all of them. Saturday's game was a little bit nervy, a little bit cagey but we were positive at half-time at 1-0 up. We wanted to move the ball quicker, but a game like this is always going to be tense.

"Ultimately, we've won the game which was what we set out to do and I couldn't be more proud of these players who have embraced the challenge of Step 4 and done us all proud."

The final three games sees an away trip to Leighton Town earlier today, followed by a home encounter with AFC Dunstable on Bank Holiday Monday. The season ends at Thame United.

The Southern League sends our congratulations to all at the club on their achievement.



HARBOROUGH TOWN | SPANISH EYES ARE SMILING

There was a unique atmosphere at Harborough Town last Saturday thanks to a large group of recently-acquired Spanish supporters who came along to give their backing to the play-off chasers.

Earlier this year the Pitching In Southern League Premier Central club entered into an agreement with leading Spanish media channel, La Media Inglesa, who were looking for an English club to 'adopt'.

They had been gripped by the club's Emirates FA Cup adventure which saw them hit the headlines by signing former Brazil international, Sandro, on their way to reaching the second round proper for the first time in their history, eventually succumbing to a thrilling 5-3 extra-time defeat at Sky Bet League One Reading.

Part of the partnership is that games are live streamed throughout Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico, Argentina and across Latin America.

The Bees have already built up a cult following online and Saturday's game saw supporters from across Spain in attendance, bringing with them plenty of flags and chants from their homeland which contributed to the occasion.

Sadly, there was no happy ending as Harborough Town slipped to a 2-1 defeat as St. Ives Town grabbed a stoppage time winner.

It failed to dampen the spirits of the Spanish contingent, which included Carlos González, who looks after the Spanish social media accounts for the club.

"The story began with Ilie Oleart, the CEO of La Media Inglesa, who was looking for a club to affiliate with within the English football pyramid system," González told us. "It took a while to find the right club that ticked all of the boxes and so conversations began with Harborough Town.

"The relationship was finally made official at the beginning of February, but over the course of the season we have built up our following on X (Twitter), Instagram and TikTok to more than 33,000.

"Saturday was the first game in which we have been able to organise a visit, but hopefully if the team makes the play-offs we will return for these games.

"I must say that the standard of the Southern League is much better than we expected with it being the seventh-tier; the professionalism, facilities, quality of players and the overall package is considerably better than lower level football in our homeland.

"The atmosphere was good too and hopefully our presence was able to enhance it even further! "Despite the defeat at the weekend, we are all excited for what lies ahead for the club, not just over these final games of the current season, but beyond that too.

"Whether the club makes the play-offs or not, it has already been an historic season that will be looked back upon for many, many years to come."

Saturday's game was also significant as it marked popular manager, Mitch Austin's 200th game at the helm.

"I am extremely proud to have reached this figure," he told us. "When I first took over I said that if I could win the United Counties League Premier title, that would be a big achievement. Targets and goals change, but to now be challenging for the play-offs at Step 3 having reached the second round of the FA Cup earlier in the season, it's just unbelievable stuff.

"I remember my first game; Holbeach away, Harborough had never won there before, but we nicked a 1-0 win with Dan Forbes, who is still with us now, getting our goal. It seems like only yesterday, but look how far we have come since.

"Obviously it was disappointing that we couldn't get something out of Saturday's game. St. Ives Town are my bogie team – it must have been due to my time at that great club!

"They were worthy winners in the end, but at this time of the season there is no time to feel sorry for ourselves, we quickly move on and our focus is now firmly fixed on the Easter weekend, which will be extremely tough against two teams in Redditch United and Barwell who need the points to get away from relegation danger.

"There will be twists and turns to come across the whole League in these final games, that's been the nature of this season, but we have our eyes firmly fixed on the play-offs; the players know what is expected of them, so we have to go out there and do it.

"The same thing will be being said at Spalding United, Stratford Town and Stamford AFC, of course, so let's see what these final three games bring. I've never known a season like it, to be honest, it appears as though nobody wants to win it as the leadership has changed hands so many times!

"There are some huge clubs in the division, the likes of Kettering Town, AFC Telford United and Halesowen Town. From what I have seen, Kettering Town are the best side; we got a last-minute penalty to make it 1-1, but they were a very impressive outfit. Bedford Town too have built on the momentum of promotion at the end of last season and look strong too."

Finally, we asked the Gaffer about how grateful he is to the club's new Spanish fan base.

"It's absolutely fantastic," he added. "They are so passionate about the club and are getting stronger and stronger in numbers. The turnout at Saturday's game was brilliant and really captured the imagination of everyone.

"I'm looking forward to some pre-season games in the sunshine in our second home!"

FIXTURES | THE WEEK AHEAD

Pitching In Southern League Premier South

MONDAY 21 APR 25

AFC Totton v Winchester City
Bracknell Town v Walton & Hersham
Chertsey Town v Hanwell Town
Dorchester Town v Poole Town
Gosport Borough v Havant & Waterlooville
Marlow v Basingstoke Town
Merthyr Town v Hungerford Town
Plymouth Parkway v Frome Town
Swindon Supermarine v Gloucester City
Taunton Town v Tiverton Town
Wimborne Town v Sholing

SATURDAY 26 APR 25

Basingstoke Town v Merthyr Town
Frome Town v AFC Totton
Gloucester City v Gosport Borough
Hanwell Town v Plymouth Parkway
Havant & Waterlooville v Wimborne Town
Hungerford Town v Dorchester Town
Poole Town v Chertsey Town
Sholing v Bracknell Town
Tiverton Town v Marlow
Walton & Hersham v Swindon Supermarine
Winchester City v Taunton Town

Pitching In Southern League Premier Central

MONDAY 21 APR 25

Banbury United v Redditch United
Biggleswade Town v Kettering Town
Bishop's Stortford v AFC Sudbury
Halesowen Town v AFC Telford United
Harborough Town v Barwell
Hitchin Town v Bedford Town
Lowestoft Town v Leiston
Royston Town v St Ives Town
Spalding United v Stamford
Stourbridge v Bromsgrove Sporting
Stratford Town v Alvechurch

SATURDAY 26 APR 25

AFC Sudbury v Harborough Town
AFC Telford United v Royston Town
Alvechurch v Lowestoft Town
Barwell v Spalding United
Bedford Town v Stourbridge
Bromsgrove Sporting v Bishop's Stortford
Kettering Town v Banbury United
Leiston v Biggleswade Town
Redditch United v Hitchin Town
St Ives Town v Stratford Town
Stamford v Halesowen Town

Pitching In Southern League Division One South

MONDAY 21 APR 25

Bashley v Bemerton Heath Harlequins
Bishops Cleeve v Evesham United
Bristol Manor Farm v Yate Town
Cinderford Town v Malvern Town
Didcot Town v Thatcham Town
Exmouth Town v Helston Athletic
Mousehole v Falmouth Town AFC
Shaftesbury v Larkhall Athletic
Tavistock AFC v Cribbs
Westbury United v Melksham Town
Willand Rovers v Bideford AFC

SATURDAY 26 APR 25

Bemerton Heath Harlequins v Cinderford Town
Bideford AFC v Westbury United
Cribbs v Bishops Cleeve
Evesham United v Bashley
Falmouth Town AFC v Shaftesbury
Helston Athletic v Bristol Manor Farm
Larkhall Athletic v Exmouth Town
Malvern Town v Willand Rovers
Melksham Town v Mousehole
Thatcham Town v Tavistock AFC
Yate Town v Didcot Town

Pitching In Southern League Division One Central

MONDAY 21 APR 25

Berkhamsted v Aylesbury United
Biggleswade FC v Barton Rovers
Enfield v Hertford Town
Flackwell Heath v Beaconsfield Town
Hadley v Welwyn Garden City
Kidlington v North Leigh
Leverstock Green v Stotfold
Northwood v Kings Langley
Real Bedford v AFC Dunstable
Ware v Leighton Town

SATURDAY 26 APR 25

AFC Dunstable v Leverstock Green
Aylesbury United v Enfield
Barton Rovers v Northwood
Beaconsfield Town v Ware
Hertford Town v Berkhamsted
Leighton Town v Hadley
North Leigh v Biggleswade FC
Stotfold v Flackwell Heath
Thame United v Real Bedford
Welwyn Garden City v Kidlington

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