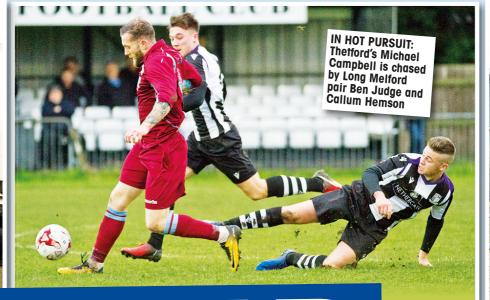


WARNING SIGNS: Plavers are hanned fence to collect balls The Long Melford dressing room before kick-off





ond in the Eastern League ter an eight-match unbeaten run, but Long Melford manager Jamie Bradbury

is refusing to get carried away. "This time last vear we were in the middle of a twomonth run without actually winning a game, and we got ourselves into a relegation battle because of it." he says. "So we're just trying to enjoy winning football matches as much as possible.

Bradbury is right to remain cautious, after all it is unusual to find a club with a negative goal difference occupying such a lofty position.

"Stanway Rovers, who put as we could have put out that



games when nothing went our way. But they were on fire and cruising. Thankfully we've put

Up until my visit for the game against Thetford Town last Saturday, Long Melford had not lost a league game since September 21, and have arguably been punching above their weight since winning promotion in 2015. A recent ground assessors' visit identified a few minor issues, but grading to give unfortunately, and we would be the least of the problems to be faced if promotion became a possibility.

to do it." Bradbury admits.

"We're lucky that we've got nine past us have a lot to answer lads who are all local and last was during the 19th century for," he laughs. "They battered week we averaged 117 appearus, and we had as good a side ances across the squad. So



ey. But we just don't have it al hundred were not unusual. would need that to step up." dance at Stoneylands struggles to reach three figures.

loads of money in and step-

One has only to walk through Long Melford, past its "We'd need to improve, and Georgian houses and windows we just don't have the finances of numerous small art galleries and boutiques, to realise that it remains as affluent as it

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The club dates back to at least 1868, and during the 1950s



ping up, because then you need mere 14 years but was a found. Deb clearly enjoys her work These days the average attenmore money and so it goes on," he added. "You've got to know your place in the pecking order. Bradbury is unsure whether Eventually you reach a plateau he would want a major investor and if that money disappears "There is no point chucking help the club grow organically."

> three wise men of Melford. Last year, secretary Richard Powell received a long service award from

In the clubhouse are the

er member of Cornard United back in 1964. the final day of last season

TIME TO CHILL:

Fans at half-time

HISTORY:

Chairman

house with d

photo of the 1953 Suffolk

Senior Cup

Around the president Richard Kemp, and to assure their own survival. chairman Colin Woodhouse were playing alongside one another for Long Melford and have never left. Colin shows me a photograph of a victory parade through the village folowing the 1953 Suffolk Senior Cup final, with him just visible

Today's visitors Thetford were the side Melford beat on

> They are also on a good run. "We've got momentum but so have they - they won't fear us one bit." Bradbury warned.

His team enjoys plenty of possession early on but it is Thetford who take the lead through Michael Campbell, against the

After the break, Melford again see a lot of the ball without troubling keeper Jamie Humphrey. At the other end Matt Walker pulls off a fine double save but is beaten by an Elliot Smith header.

With less than 15 minutes to go. Jacob Brown pulls one back but as the Villagers press for an equaliser, they leave themselves open at the back. Inevitably, Thetford break away and Tanner Call puts the result beyond doubt a minute from the end, although not before Brown rattles the visitors' crossbar in the dying moments. The official attendance is 95.

Philosophical Bradbury adds: "It was going to have to come to an end at some point but if you'd told me eight weeks ago that we were going to go on an eight-game unbeaten run I would have taken that. So we'll brush ourselves down and see if we can crack on next week.

"It's very important now that









JAME HAMPIGE SOM BOND ANNEW CHAPT ANNET MORTO O) RUDT SMITH BROD SAUDE ROSS BRIET I) HUMBE COMP MANNEY COMP TANNER COLL

LUNCH IS SERVED: The

view from the boardroom

TEAM NEWS!

Pinning up th

