Three cheers for hat-trick hero Thorpe 2

Plymouth 3 Luton Town 3
TONY THORPE bagged a
maiden hat-trick as ten
man Hatters snatched a
last gasp equaliser.

But Home Park turned into an ugly second half battleground as referee Alan Wiley lost any semblance of control in a frantic final five minutes.

From the moment he sent off Mitchell Thomas for a 72nd minute deliberate hand -ball on his own line, the scene was set.

Michael Evans smashed home the spot kick to make it 2-2 – then three minutes later lashed a 15 yard effort beyond Ian Feuer's despairing grasp to fire never-say-die Argyle into the lead for the first time in the match.

But battling Luton were in no mood to see an 11 game unbeaten streak come to an end at windswept and rain lashed Home Park – and were rewarded for their persistence and passion just three minutes from time.

Substitute Kim Grant got two bites of the cherry wide on the right after an error from Chris Curran, and from his precise

Report by PETE KENYON

centre Thorpe popped up to volley sweetly into the far corner.

Grobbelaar might have done better and his manager Neil Warnock criticised his controversial goalkeeper, due to face match-rigging charges next year.

But the final 15 minutes for all the flying fists, tackles and harsh words from players, managers, fans (and even journalists) all added up to make one of the most absorbing finales I have ever seen.

Six players found themselves in the referee's book, including Graham Alexander and goalkeeper Ian Feuer, in addition to a red carded Mitchell Thomas.

Argyle fans in the far corner of the ground swarmed down the seats to get closer to the action following the penalty, fists raised in obscene gestures at the 300 or so Hatters' fans.

Warnock had strong words with the referee following a dubious off-side decision, then later accused Hatters' boss

Lennie Lawrence of getting Ronnie Mauge booked in the dying seconds.

And as Luton went off to a crescendo of boos, assistant boss Wayne Turner blew sarcastic kisses at the angry Argyle faithful in the main stand.

Only Grobbelaar and Feuer shook hands at the end of the match - though that may have something to do with the fact they were at opposite ends of the pitch.

Luton started brightly and Thorpe bagged his first after getting on the end of a grass cutter of a corner from Graham Alexander.

On the half hour Plymouth hit back with a well worked goal - Ronnie Mauge getting on the end of a sweeping end-toend move with a crisp header at the far post.

Hatters restored their lead shortly after the hour after Ceri Hughes launched a cross-field pass which Grobbelaar looked favourite to get, until a fatal hesitation.

Thorpe pounced, rounded the goalkeeper then fell but managed to swing a leg and stab the ball in from eight yards out.

Then came the turning point - the penalty - closely followed by Argyle's third, but Luton would not lie down.

After the match Lawrence paid tribute to star man Thorpe and enthused "That game had everything, didn't it.?

"The whole thing got a bit heated, to say the least, but these things happen in football. It was a totally absorbing last fifteen minutes and everyone in the ground from players to fans got extremely passionate.

"That is not a bad thing, and from a playing point of view it proved both sets of players cared enough about the result."

Of the penalty incident he said: "Mitchell had to go but I thought the referee should have blown up for a foul on Feuer just before the header went in, and in any case I thought the ball was over the line already before our lad handled.

"Apart from that, I thought the referee's handling of the game was very good under extreme pressure.

"I thought we were the better team but Plymouth had a right go from the moment they went behind. The penalty was the turning point, but for us to recover from ten men and 3-2 down really pleased me."



Tony Thorpe gets swamped by team-mates after scoring Luton's opening goal



Stuart Douglas is flying high after his return to the starting line-up.



Paul Showler stretches to win a tackle