

Thorpe robs moneybags Fulham

TONY THORPE took just eleven minutes to spoil Fulham Chairman Mohammed Al Fayed's birthday celebrations and exact sweet revenge for the 4-1 home league defeat.

The Hatters' star striker climbed off the substitutes' bench to bag his 19th goal of the season and leave the Kenilworth Road club just three games away from Wembley.

Thorpe settled matters with the very last touch of the game after earlier going close twice in his brief but exciting outing.

With the game heading for "golden goal" extra time, the Hatters keeper stooped low to head home a Simon Davies cross.

Earlier, the man who made way for Thorpe, Dwight Marshall, had given the visitors a 20th-minute lead against a much-changed Fulham side.



FULHAM 1
HATTERS 2



Marshall grabbed only his second goal of the season when Fulham's third-choice keeper Mark Walton could only parry Steve Davis' volley into his path.

The Jamaican striker, who enjoyed a lively performance on his return from the Kenilworth Road wilderness, was quickest to react and buried his shot into Walton's bottom corner.

Before Marshall's deadlock breaker, Kelvin Davis had pulled off a fine first-minute save from striker Kyle Lightbourne but the Hatters enjoyed the best of the first-half's play from that moment on.

Allen saw his shot flash just wide and, moments before the interval, went even closer, his deliberate drive coming back off the

inside of the post after he had burst through a flat-footed home defence.

Fulham lifted themselves after the break and on 62 minutes they were level when Alan White's poor clearance fell to Matt Lawrence. His deep cross was met by Lightbourne who scored with the aid of an uprigh.

In the 74th-minute Lightbourne, on loan from Coventry, nearly added a second when his downward header was kept out by an unorthodox save from Davis who scrambled the ball on to the cross bar.

A minute before Thorpe's decider, the Hatters survived a scare when Richard Harvey cleared the danger after Davis could only parry a Paul Brooker shot.

HATTERS: Davis (K), Patterson, Harvey, Evers, Davis (S), White, Allen, McLaren (Waddock, 75), Oldfield, Davies, Marshall (Thorpe, 79). Att: 8,103.