



● ALL RIGHT: Scorer Rory Allen.

Hope 'n' Rory as Allen maroons Mariners

LOAN star Rory Allen grabbed the glory as the Hatters enjoyed a single goal victory over promotion chasing Grimsby.

An excellent team effort in Humberside was perpetuated with several outstanding individual contributions and capped by Allen's second goal for the Hatters.

Allen's crucial strike came in the 54th minute and in circumstances identical to his debut goal at Walsall. As in the West Midlands, the Spurs youngster was the quickest to react to the rebound after a David Oldfield shot and kept his cool to tap into an empty net.

Oldfield's effort was worth a goal in itself. The inform striker hit a terrific and instinctive 30-yard volley that had keeper Aidan Davison well beaten. The Mariners' number one was still stunned by the ferocity of the strike, when it cannoned back off an upright and, before he could regain his composure, he was picking Allen's follow-up out of his net.

The goal was the reward for some enterprising and crisp play from the Hatters, who proved themselves a match for the division's most attractive footballing side.

Dwight Marshall produced his liveliest and most



GRIMSBY 0 HATTERS 1
Dave Flett reports



consistent display of the season, supplementing the impressive Allen and Oldfield, who again combined well in a hard-working partnership.

At the back, Darren Patterson led a disciplined defence in the absence of Steve Davis and, behind him, Kelvin Davis once again proved himself a goalkeeper of immense potential. Two more breathtaking saves enhanced his growing reputation and were as influential in bringing the three points back to Luton as Allen's goal. On 15 minutes a goal seemed certain when Paul Groves met a corner with a firm downward header only for the Hatters' keeper to fling himself low to his left and dig the ball out on his goalline.

In the second half it was Kingsley Black who was denied by Davis' spellbinding reflexes, the ex-Hatter seeing his point-blank header turned away by the England Under 21 international.

In between he bossed his area with confidence and raced off his line to avert danger on the few occasions

Grimsby strikers broke through the middle unopposed. Mitchell Thomas also gradually neutralised the early threat posed by Kevin Donovan's pace on the right and Julian James did the same to David Smith on the opposite flank.

At the other end, the resourceful Allen harassed his markers all evening and saw a looping header well held by Davison early on, before having an effort ruled out for a marginal off-side on 29 minutes.

Graham Alexander rifled a shot just wide as the Hatters went in search of a decisive second, but had Mariners sub, Neil Woods, been a little more careful, it could have been the home side next on the scoresheet.

In the 90th minute Woods found himself in yards of space inside the box but shot inexplicably wide as the home team completed a worrying fourth game without a goal. Equally, Hatters' sub Gary Doherty, only brought on to waste time, could have bagged a goal with his first touch, but saw his shot in the dying seconds come back off a post.

Team: Davis (K), James, Thomas, Waddock, Patterson, White, Marshall (Evers, 86), McLaren, Oldfield, (Gray, 80), Allen (Doherty, 90), Alexander. Att: 4,455.