

Angry Hatters fired up for vital victory

Town bounce back after Johnson's red card

A RED card for Marvin Johnson spurred an angry Hatters side to a 2-0 victory over Colchester on Saturday.

Down to ten men after Johnson's clumsy professional foul on Neil Gregory, the home side fought bitterly for their three points with Stuart Douglas and Steve Davis grabbing second half goals.

The experienced defender's dismissal seemed to fire up Lennie Lawrence's men although Graham Alexander's angry altercation with Kelvin Davis on 79 minutes might have been taking things a bit too far.

Alexander shoved his keeper away after a nose-to-nose debate about a conceded corner but, with that aggression channelled more constructively, there was only ever going to be one winner at Kenilworth Road.

Johnson received his marching orders nine minutes after the interval when he got into a dreadful tangle just inside his own half.

An attempted dummy became a stumble and Gregory suddenly had a clear run on goal.

With few options left, Johnson pulled the Colchester man down and it wasn't a surprise when referee Roger Furnandiz pulled out his red card.

SACRIFICED

Phil Gray was subsequently sacrificed to a mixture of catcalls and claps from the home crowd with Mitchell Thomas filling in at centre back.

Gray had a frustrating afternoon and had been abused by sections of the Kenilworth Road crowd after missing a gilt-edged chance in the third minute of first-half injury time.

Matthew Spring's vicious volley was only palmed into Gray's path by Colchester keeper Carl



Emberson but, the Hatters striker hit his point blank shot straight at a prostrate Emberson who hadn't had time to recover from the first shot.

Gray had exited the action by the time his partner Douglas broke the deadlock on 62 minutes.

Seconds away from being replaced himself and perhaps heading for another spell in the reserves, Douglas' timing could not have been better.

His goal owed a lot to the persistence of Sean Evers and a kind bounce but he made the most of his luck with a tidy side-footed finish into the bottom corner.

Six minutes later, the hard-working forward could have had a second when he raced on to a searching pass from the impressive Gavin McGowan but dragged his shot wide.

It was left to skipper Steve Davis to make the points safe with a typical 82nd-minute effort.

The Kenilworth Road colossus kept Colchester's awkward beanpole of a striker Mark Sale quiet for most of the afternoon and then added the coup de grace with a towering far post header from Ray McKinnon's corner that Emberson could only palm into the bottom corner.

Davis and McGowan both enjoyed outstanding afternoons with the ever maturing Matthew Spring not far behind.

McGowan and Spring both went close on two occasions in the first ten minutes before a deliberate Johnson side foot from 20 yards had to be turned around the post by Emberson.

On 39 minutes Davis' header was parried into the path of Liam George who fired into the side netting.

At the other end, Colchester showed little attacking adventure and ex-Hatter David Greene provided the first real scare for



● DEADLY DAVIS: Skipper Steve Davis heads his second goal of the season to wrap up victory against Colchester after Marvin Johnson (inset) had been sent off.

the home team when, on 51 minutes, his header had to be tipped over by Kelvin Davis.

Even after Johnson's dismissal Colchester seemed happy for the score to stay at 0-0 and, when Douglas ruined that script, they still struggled to find any attacking impetus.

Sale wasted their only real opportunity of an equaliser on 72 minutes when he rode a wild challenge by Steve Davis and bamboozled Thomas before shooting weakly at Kelvin Davis.

After last season's Kenilworth Road problems, manager Lawrence

was pleased to get over the mental barrier of winning at home for the first time this season.

He said: "It was pleasing to pull it out of the fire like that after going down to ten men. We were always in control and I was happy that Douglas got on the scoresheet because he has worked hard for that."

HATTERS: Davis (K), Alexander, McGowan, Spring, Davis (S), Johnson, McKinnon, Evers, Douglas (Fotiadis, 73), Gray (Thomas, 57), George (Bacque, 80).

ATT: 5,005. **STAR MAN:** Steve Davis.

e joins injury list

LIAM GEORGE became the latest