

AFTER A comparatively lifeless first-half the crowd were at last given something to cheer about when Terry Branston showed his forwards the way to the back of the net after 36 minutes to give the Town the lead.

However their cheers were effectively stifled three minutes later when a determined-looking Orient — who were proving to be more formidable opponents than expected — equalised through Rofe.

Of the two doubtful players, Terry Branston had recovered sufficiently from illness to appear, but Graham French was ruled out after a late test. Manager Alec Stock said, "He has a slightly pulled muscle and could have played at a pinch, but there would have been a risk of aggravation."

I understand that there is every chance of him being able to return at Bristol on Monday.

Deputy was John Ryan, and George Potter, who has made only one League appearance this season, was nominated as substitute in preference to Billy McDermott.

Of the 13 players announced by Orient yesterday, player-manager Jimmy Bloomfield and Roy Massey stood down, with the latter becoming the substitute.

What had promised to be a dry afternoon, turned into a wet one when rain began to fall about 20 minutes before the start.

The start was delayed while Goddard made some complaint to the referee about the net in the Kenilworth Road goal, which he was due to defend, and trainer Reg Game, hoisted up first the goalkeeper, and then perched on the referee's shoulders — much to the amusement of the crowd — went to do some hasty repairs.

There was a quiet start, with neither team settling down immediately, though Branston stopped a snap raid engineered by Peter Allen, by slipping the ball smartly back to Davie.

VOLLEY

Rioch was pulled up for a foul on Slater, whose free-kick was headed by Moore to Peter Allen, who volleyed it back straight into Davie's hands.

From the clearance, the Town attack really moved for the first time, and after the ball had bobbed about in front of goal it went to Rioch, who hit it first time,

and Goddard, diving quickly, just pushed it for a corner.

With the Town beginning to settle down now, they had a free kick on the edge of the penalty area, pushed from Rioch to Lewis, whose shot was well adrift.

Rain was still falling steadily, but had had no noticeable effect so far on the pitch.

There was one awkward moment in front of the Town goal when the ball bounced awkwardly for Dougan, but Parmenter also found difficulty in controlling it, and the result was a goal-kick.

SHUTTERS

Quite the best attempt for Orient came from Harper who missed a post by a couple of feet. Orient were employing Peter Allen mostly in a mid-field role, but in these early stages they had not put up the defensive shutters as had been expected.

In fact, they were not afraid to attack, and it was perhaps as well that Branston's leg was in the way of a cross shot by Dyson, which was deflected for a corner.

It was not long before the Town were plugging away for the vital first goal, and Keith Allen headed down a centre from Sheffield. The ball bounced a trifle awkwardly, but Goddard was on the spot to pull it down.

Next Town raid was sparked off by Ryan making a successful tackle on Parmenter just inside his own half, after which he set out hotfoot down the wing, only to put the ball too far ahead.

A sortie by Orient led to Rofe making a long-range shot that Davie held safely. At least, that was on the target area, which was more than could be said for an effort by Sheffield, who put the ball behind after a determined enough run.

Then Rioch drove over, only to have a second chance when a free-kick was awarded, but this went wrong and Taylor cleared with an almighty thump.

Too many of the Town's passes were going astray for

TEAMS

LUTON TOWN: Davie; Dougan, Bannister; Slough, Branston, Moore; Ryan, Allen (K.), Sheffield, Lewis, Rioch. Substitute: Potter.

ORIENT: Goddard; Howe, Rofe; Harper, Mancini, Taylor; Slater, Bullock, Allen (P.), Dyson, Parmenter. Substitute: Massey.

Referee: Mr. W. S. Castle, of Dudley.

them to take complete command of the situation, and certainly they could scarcely claim to be on top at the moment. Some slack work by Bannister let in Slater, whose centre was wasted when Bullock made a shot from long range.

HASTILY

Nearest approach to a goal came when Rioch let fly from just outside the penalty area, and Goddard, diving hastily, was beaten, and fortunate that the ball flew just the wrong side of the post.

Now the Town raids were being broken up rather too easily, and Orient were being allowed to get in the game, particularly through some adventurous work by Rofe, but so far they had given no real indication of finishing power.

Certainly there was half a chance when Bullock went up for a high centre from Slater, with Branston. Neither made contact with the ball, and Bullock looked as if he thought he should have had a penalty, an opinion which the referee certainly didn't share.

In the first half an hour there had not been a great deal of cohesion or sparkle from the Town attack, and clear-cut openings were not being created. There were signs of something better when Ryan and Lewis combined cleverly, only for the former to put his shot or centre — whichever he intended — much too close to Goddard.

BOUNCED

A much better effort came from Moore, running deep into the Orient penalty area from a throw-in by Ryan, and he somehow got the bouncing ball down before driving it hard and true, but Goddard was well behind it to clutch it safely.

Goddard was serving Orient well, and it needed a superlative save by him, diving to his right, to prevent a tremendous drive by Slough finding the corner of the net. So in quick succession the wing-halves had pointed the way to the forwards.

WHIPPED

Now the Town were beginning to take a grip, forcing Orient back into defence, and Taylor received a talking to from the referee for whipping Lewis's legs from under him near the corner flag.

The free-kick was partly cleared but the ball came back again from Lewis, and BRANSTON, right up in the penalty area, rose above Sheffield to glance the ball into the net with his head to give the Town the lead after 36 minutes.

Orient's reaction was immediate, and they came back

with tremendous determination. There could have been trouble from a centre from the right, which Mancini headed down, just wide of Bullock, and then in the 39th minute they equalised through ROFE who had previously shown a liking for attack.

PLANTED

This time with Orient still pressing he came racing through a gap in the Town defence, and planted the ball well wide of Davie, to open up the game again.

Orient seemed to have shaken the Town, who were now forced back on the defence.

On the stroke of half-time the Town had an escape when Mancini headed the ball on to the bar, and it went over.

Half-time:

LUTON 1
ORIENT 1

Like last week, it had been a disappointing first-half showing by the Town, and the only consolation seemed to be that they at least were kicking towards their favourite Oak Road end.

When the teams made a belated appearance for the second half, there was a shock in that Branston was not among them. One can only assume that the illness which had made him doubtful for this match had overtaken him again. Slough moved to centre-half and Potter came on as substitute.

PROMINENT

Orient were prominent at the start of the second half and the Town were a bit fortunate when Davie failed to cut out a centre from the left, and Bullock headed just over.

When the Town made a move there were appeals for a penalty for hands when Dyson stopped a firm drive by Moore. There was no doubt that the ball hit his hand, but the referee decided it was accidental.

Now the Town were making strenuous efforts to improve the situation, and there was applause for Ryan for a through pass.

Again the Town were settling in the Orient half, helped on by a mistake by Taylor, but they were forced out again. Then came a repetition of the nuisance of toilet rolls being thrown into the Orient goalmouth.

This was while the Town were pressing hard and should have taken the lead again when Sheffield was left with a chance. He met the ball with his head, and even though Goddard was beaten, Rofe was able to kick off the line.

PRESSURE

Now the Town pressure was at its height, and Sheffield made another attempt, this time with an overhead

How the goals came

BRANSTON for Luton after 36 minutes
ROFE for Orient after 39 minutes.
SHEFFIELD for Luton after 62 minutes.

shot that went through a crowd of players to Goddard.

The crowd was now firmly behind the Town, as they made attack after attack, which saw Orient lose some of their previous confidence.

Relief came to them in the shape of a stoppage for attention for injury to Peter Allen, who resumed with a limp.

Play was on again with a long free-kick by Dougan and Orient at that stage had nearly everybody back in their penalty area.

Two determined raids by Rioch failed to find him the room for a clear shot he was seeking, and then Ryan put behind from a reasonable position.

RECOVERY

Then the goal came in the 62nd minute from SHEFFIELD. He clashed with Mancini, after which the ball ran loose, and Sheffield was the first to recover to drive the ball well wide of the left-hand of the diving Goddard.

The Orient defence was reduced to panic following a clever run by Ryan. This brought a corner which Rioch went to take. This Goddard saved splendidly, but there was not much rest for the Orient defence now and things were running the Town's way almost completely.

Goddard was being fully employed, and was again in action saving a dangerous lob by Potter. Harrassed by Sheffield he could not clear properly, and the ball went to Lewis, who headed towards goal, and it was Mancini, standing almost under the bar who headed to safety.

Mancini then stopped a shot from Rioch, who picked up the clearance. He got the ball through the crowd of players only for it to go straight to Goddard.

There was no question about it—Orient were now being outplayed and with their defence almost continually at action stations.

A three-cornered movement between Rioch, Potter and Sheffield, nearly led to another opening being made, but Mancini again came to the rescue.

With nine minutes left, Orient introduced their substitute, bringing on Massey for Slater.

Then, somewhat surprisingly, Orient came right back into the game and might have had an equaliser when with Davie out of his goal Massey lifted the ball too high.