

It's Laurie Sheffield to rescue again

Luton Town 2
Orient 1

68/69

ROGER DUCKWORTH REPORTS

AFTER a shaky first half, Luton Town grabbed two vital promotion points against Orient this afternoon — with Laurie Sheffield hitting the winner after 62 minutes.

Branston put Luton ahead in the 35th minute but Orient equalised three minutes later.

There were dual reasons for the crowd being a bit on the small side this afternoon — the Grand National and a heavy rain shower which came 30 minutes before the start.

There was good news from Luton fans when an announcement was made that centre half and skipper Terry Branston would, after all, play. Branston was yesterday reported to be suffering from after effects of his attack of German measles and was extremely doubtful.

On the other hand there was worse news about Graham French. He strained a thigh in the game against Barrow on Wednesday night and had to fall out today. He was replaced by the speedy John Ryan on the right wing.

And there was also a change of substitute — George Potter replaced Fred Jardine who was being given a run out with the reserves at Southampton.

Television

Before the start tiny Luton mascot, Mark Bird, aged 10, received a huge cheer from the Oak Road end when he beat town goalkeeper Sandy Davie with a shot.

The match was being filmed by Anglia Television and will be shown tomorrow afternoon.

Orient's forwards showed some neat running in the early minutes and after a good crossfield move between Bullock and Slater, Slough came to the Luton rescue and cleared.

Lewis hurled himself forward after a tackle by Taylor but the referee was not fooled and waved play on.

Branston came to Luton's rescue for the second time when he anticipated Dyson's overhead kick and made a good clearance.

Two corners

Seconds later Rioch let fly a tremendous left-foot drive which the scrambling Goddard was lucky to push round for a corner on the right.

This was taken by Rioch and the Orient goalkeeper made another spectacular save when he got a fist to a long range header from Slough and just managed to turn it round for another corner.

Then Dyson almost upset Luton with a tricky run in from the left and it was only an outstretched foot by Branston that gave away a corner as the former Watford man's shot was heading for the corner of the goal.

In the 13th minute Keith Allen missed a glorious chance of putting Luton ahead when he met Sheffield's accurate centre right in front of the goal. But he tried to head the ball down past Goddard and his effort was mis-timed.

Shot blocked

Both sides were showing some good running and plenty of skill on the ball. Rioch showed strength in racing passed Howe, who obstructed him. When he might have given Luton the advantage the

TEAMS

LUTON: Davie; Dougan, Bannister; Slough, Branston, Moore; Ryan, Allen, Sheffield, Lewis, Rioch. Sub: Potter.
THE ORIENT: Goddard; Howe, Rofe; Harper, Mancini, Taylor; Slater, Bullock, Allen, Dyson, Parmenter. Sub: Massey.
Referee: Mr W. S. Castle (Dudley).

GOALS

BRANSTON (Luton) 35 mins
ROFE (The Orient) 38 mins
SHEFFIELD (Luton) 62 mins

Att: 13,915

referee gave the Town the free kick which Lewis pushed to Rioch whose shot was blocked.

Luton allowed some indecision to creep into their game and were allowing The Orient far too much leeway in attack.

There was a period after some 20 minutes play when Luton appeared to lose their grip on the game and during which time their passing and tackling left a lot to be desired.

After two useful looking Orient raids, Rioch tried to sort things out with a tremendous right-foot volley which went inches wide of the post as Goddard hurled himself across his goal.

Luton were urgently in need of a goal at this stage to give their game — and their confidence — a boost. They seemed to lack rhythm in attack against the fast covering Orient defence.

Surrounded

Often what could have been good-looking Luton attacks were turned to Orient advantage by bad passing. Often Sheffield was up-field on his own and amply surrounded by the opposition.

Luton were showing plenty of running but a lot of it was casual. Ryan had a shot saved after working a good move with Lewis and then Moore showed promise when he charged through to hit a shot at Goddard.

But the real sting was missing.

Alan Slough nearly put things to right in the 33rd minute when he hammered a shot at goal from an unmarked position near the penalty spot. But Goddard rose to the occasion with a magnificent diving save with which he managed to turn Slough's fierce drive round the post for a corner. This was put behind by Allen.

Luton's much-needed first goal came in the 35th minute from skipper TERRY BRANSTON. It followed a Lewis free-kick out on the left; he had had his legs whipped away by Taylor.

Orient piled all eleven players back into the penalty area and cleared. But Bannister hit the ball back into the melee and there was Branston in front of goal to nod it past Goddard.

But just three minutes later Orient were back on terms. There was some lax play by the Town defence and full back ROFE was allowed to chase through and he shot low past Davie as the Luton goalkeeper collided with the retreating Ryan.

Right on half-time Orient very nearly took the lead when Mancini moved up for a right-



Keith Allen (8) leaps between Orient defenders to head goalwards with Brian Lewis (10) looking on

wing corner and headed the ball against the crossbar.

HT: Luton Town 1 Orient 1.

The fact that the players took an extra two or three minutes for half time did not help the patience of the Luton crowd who had been disappointed by the standard of football served up in the first half.

When the players eventually appeared substitute George Potter took the field for Luton in place of Terry Branston.

Orient were first to make the running in the second half and Bullock had bad luck with a header that went over the top after he had risen to meet a neat chip from Dyson.

Slough had taken over Branston's centre half position and Potter had taken over Slough's mid-field role.

Best move

Luton were still out of touch and when they found the ball bobbing about in the Orient box Lewis and Sheffield were both unable to make anything of the situation and it was left to Moore to try a hard shot which was blocked en route to goal.

Town's best move of the half, and possibly the match, was set off by John Ryan, who out-ran his three attendants and split the Orient defence wide open

with a beautiful pass to Lewis who was unable to control it and the ball went straight out of play.

As a shower of toilet rolls were flung by some idiot behind the Oak Road goal Sheffield made the miss of the match.

Lewis put across a perfect centre which was met by the centre-forward somewhere about chest high right under the crossbar but he failed to turn it into the net.

Some brief excitement was caused when Allen sent Rioch away. At top speed Rioch hit the ball over the head of a defender and raced round him but was unable to quite get to the ball before goalkeeper Goddard.

Blocked

And Town came right back with a powerful looking attack in which Sheffield tried to tee up Lewis and then Potter had a hard shot blocked.

In the 57th minute it was Allen again who sparked off a good move by beating two men with a strong run on the left and managing to get his centre over only to see it well collected by Goddard at the near post.

Luton were certainly beginning to raise their game and a move, once again started by

Allen, broke down after a promising run through by Rioch.

In the 62nd minute Town's increased pressure paid off when LAURIE SHEFFIELD scored past Goddard.

Orient briefly relieved the pressure when a long overhead return from Moore was met in the goalmouth by Sheffield and Mancini. Sheffield won the duel in the air and the ball dropped just right for him to swing round and hit it into the net from close in.

And Luton came back for more. Ryan embarked on another good dribble down the right and he neatly slipped the ball inside. The move was spoiled when a flying Orient boot conceded a corner.

Back Luton came again and this time Rioch did well to get his pass across and again Orient gave away a corner. Then Mancini headed a Lewis header off the line.

Thirteen minutes from the end Orient substitute Massey came on for Slater.

With seven minutes to go Sheffield put across a good centre from the right and Goddard foiled Lewis by pushing the ball round for a corner. From this, taken by Lewis, Sheffield just failed to reach the ball in the air.