

BELOW FORM TOWN HAD TO STRUGGLE

68/69

LUTON TOWN 2, ORIENT 1

BEFORE THEY made certain of the two points which they simply had to have from Orient at Kenilworth Road this afternoon, to drive on their promotion ambitions, the Town again caused their supporters some anxiety and heartburning.

Most of that came during the first half when they seemed to lack a sense of urgency, suffer from a kind of lethargy and play well below their best form.

Even though they had more of the play generally, they did not create sufficient scoring openings, and when they did the finishing was below standard.

In fact, it was symptomatic of the forwards' form that the best scoring attempts came from wing-halves Slough and Moore before finally centre-half Terry Branston put them ahead six minutes before half-time.

Even then, the Town were far from settled because Orient hit back to equalise almost immediately and very nearly took a shock lead just before half-time.

When the second half began, Branston did not re-appear and I learned later that the reason for this was that he received a knock on the thigh muscle during the first half.

It is as well that the Town have such an able deputy as Alan Slough, who moved into the middle for the second half today, and again showed stopping powers and determination.

Not that he was fully extended, because the second half was a completely different story, with the Town crowding on pressure from the start, and really hitting the Orient defence hard.

Backed up by the majority of the crowd of 13,915 they really stormed the opposing goal and success simply had to come. Indeed it did in the 62nd minute, when Laurie Sheffield, who had largely an unproductive match, rose to the occasion with an invaluable goal, and this was enough to put the Town home and dry.

Determined defensive work and some fine saves by Goddard prevented them from increasing their lead, but there really was no threat to their victory, even though Orient unexpectedly came back in the last ten minutes without really promising to save the game.

So, it was a rather unconvincing Town victory, and to keep up their challenge it is necessary that they should achieve a bit more consistency than they have at the moment, and find more scoring power in the front line.

It was really difficult to reconcile the different displays in the two halves. Possibly there were some pointed words from manager Alec Stock at half-time, and these worked the trick.

Forwards, Rioch looked as dangerous as anyone but Lewis was not much in it, and apart from his goal Sheffield was pretty well held.

There were times when Ryan flashed into the picture, but I should say that the skill of French, and the ability to hold the ball, was missed to some extent.

Allen got control of the middle of the field in the second half, along with Potter, who has been something of a forgotten man recently, but who showed during the last 45 minutes that he can come in to do a useful job when required.

This was Luton's 11th match without defeat, which perhaps makes a bit of nonsense of my remarks about consistency earlier, but I was thinking in particular about today, and the match last Saturday.