

TOWN HELD TO A DRAW AGAIN



Luton striker Barry Butlin outjumps the Orient defence

LUTON's attack and midfield were again outplayed today, and so Town's fans are still left waiting to see another home victory.

The Town produced their usual lively start and looked set to end their gloomy home run when Aston scored after 21 minutes. But the Londoners equalised within three minutes to earn a share of the points.

There were some impressive names in the Orient line-up. They had full-back Peter Wall on loan from Crystal Palace along with his former Palace club mates Phil Hoadley and Gerry Queen in the side. And playing in the No 7 shirt in midfield was Ricky Heppollette, who signed at Christmas for about £40,000 from Preston North End.

Luton kept to the side that lost at Preston last week, with John Ryan and Anderson switching positions.

Luton started off determined to do something about their miserable home record, and in front of a miserably small crowd the first shot came from Vic Halom but went way over the top.

Orient hit straight back and a good swerving left-footer

Luton 1 Orient 1 72/73
By ROGER DUCKWORTH

from Queen was capably saved by Barber.

And after two minutes Luton almost had a goal. A cross from Shanks was missed by Harris and Anderson nipped in on the left to put a square ball back across the goalmouth. Halom was steaming in but at full stretch he could only divert the ball wide of the far post with his right foot.

An unusually bad header back to his goalkeeper by Thomson put Barber under pressure from Queen and Downing, but Downing's

resulting corner went behind.

Luton were doing their customary thing of attacking like mad in the early stages. A long free kick from Shanks was jumped for by Butlin but he could not quite make the height and the ball skidded out of play off the top of his head.

But the Londoners looked to have more ideas than their League position suggests and they were always ready to hit back. The next man to do so was full-back Arber, and again Barber got confidently behind his shot as he went down.

Town's early problem was that they were giving Orient too much time to pull themselves together at the back.

After 16 minutes Aston wasted a chance when he shook off the clutching hands of Arber on the wing, escaped all on his own and then banged across a ball which was neither centre nor shot. It went out of play on the far side of the field with Butlin chasing hopelessly.

Goal

But five minutes later ASTON made up for this lapse when he put the Town into the lead. And it was a goal which brought severe protests from the Orient.

Thomson took a throw for Luton on the left, and although Aston got the ball it had not gone into play. So Thomson was given another throw by which time Orient had stopped marking Aston. He took the good throw in his stride, cut into the penalty box and hit a low right-foot shot at goal.

Even then, Luton were a bit fortunate as the slippery ball skidded under the body of goalkeeper Goddard.

But three minutes later Orient were all square. The Town defence gave centre-forward BRISLEY far too much scope to get in a shot which looked as if it was going over the top. But it didn't. It dipped under the corner of the crossbar into the top of the net with Barber standing, arms raised, in surprise.

Downing and Bowyer pulled off a superb piece of football on the right wing and from the cross Downing was just about to shoot when Moore made a timely tackle to clear.

Luton needed the confidence of another goal to give them that sorely needed home win, and it nearly came in the 38th minute.

A long shot from Anderson was stopped in its flight and Butlin picked up the rebound to fire a shot at goal. Goddard went full-length to stop it and was hurt as Aston roared in to finish the move off. Aston's effort went wide and the referee awarded a goal kick.

HT: 1-1

MATCH DETAILS

LUTON: Barber, Shanks, Thomson, John Ryan, Garner, Moore, Jimmy Ryan, Anderson, Butlin, Halom, Aston. Sub: Slough.

ORIENT: Goddard, Arber, Wall, Hoadley, Harris, Allen, Heppollette, Downing, Brisley, Queen, Bowyer. Sub: Dyson. Referee: Mr A. Morrissey (Bramhall)

ASTON (Luton), 21 min

BRISLEY (Orient) 24 min

Attendance: 8,344

VERDICT

By ROGER DUCKWORTH

DOWN-in-the-mouth Luton gave another disjointed home performance this afternoon and received the bird from a miserable crowd of just over 8,000.

And one can sympathise with the supporters. Luton had few attacking ideas and were generally outplayed by the Londoners who played far superior football than their relegation position suggests.

It was one of those games when there always seemed more opponents' shirts than Luton shirts. And this suggests to me that the other side are doing most of the running.

Luton's attacking policy seems to have gone out with the dry ground and today they were again in trouble in midfield where the drive must come from for any attacking side.

Luton scored first when Aston skidded the ball underneath Goddard with a good shot following a twice-taken throw by Thomson.

Star man

But Luton were never able to sit on their lead, and three minutes later Brisley made it all level when a lazy defence left him room and time to shoot past Barber.

That was the lot as far as scoring goes, but some good things must also be said about Luton.

First of all there is the performance of left half John Moore, who again was Luton's Man of the Match. He had a close challenger in right back Don Shanks.

Of the midfield players, Halom ran selflessly. But Luton could not string much together and the result was another scrappy game and, more important, another game without a win at home.

Luton had a remarkable let-off in the opening seconds of the second half. A stray pass into the goalmouth by Shanks brought a drive from Brisley which was brilliantly saved by Barber. The ball was knocked out to Allen who smashed it into the net from about 18 yards. Luckily for Luton, the offside flag was flapping.

Following a disputed Orient corner, Downing and Brisley had shots blocked by Ryan and Shanks. But the Town defence was looking decidedly dodgy.

Effort

Luton continued to be outplayed in midfield by Orient, and even when Halom set off on a promising run, his pass into the centre was well shy of Butlin and was easily scooped away by Allen.

There was bags of effort from Halom, and when he went through on another gritty run he was brought down from behind by Downing ten yards outside the penalty area. The free kick was taken by Anderson, but again it was easily cleared by this resolute Orient defence.

Orient never stopped pursuing the ball, and another cross from the right produced a header from the dusky skinned Heppollette which went just wide of the right hand post.

Luton hit back and a centre from Aston produced an overhead kick at goal by Anderson but it lacked conviction and Goddard caught easily.

There was another spark from the Luton attack when Halom beat down a clearance and worked the getaway with Aston before setting Jimmy Ryan clear on the left. Ryan's shot went over the crossbar.

Halom did well to control a hard-headed pass from Anderson and send Jimmy Ryan away with a good pass. But Ryan did not whip the ball across quickly enough.

There was a roar of approval from the crowd when Slough went on with 12 minutes to go, but they booed the decision to take Anderson off.