

Hill's late winner finishes Jackson's defiance

ORIENT DETAILS

A STUNNING goal by Ricky Hill two minutes from time ended the lone defiance of goalkeeper John Jackson as the Town's superior attacking flair beat Orient at Kenilworth Road.

But equally vital was the triumph over adversity of the other goalkeeper, Jake Findlay.

He gifted Orient a goal in the second minute, dropping a far post cross by Roffey to enable Ian Moores to head into an empty net. Then, after 30 minutes of barracking from impatient and disappointed customers, he transformed the jeers into jubilant cheers when he dived to his left to save a penalty by Moores.

The fact that the penalty was dubious, to say the least, added to the enjoyment of Town supporters. Fans on both sides were baffled by some of the decisions of late sub referee John Sewell, of Leicester.

He penalised Kirk Stephens for a tackle on Ralph Coates, yet missed far worse incidents at both ends, and even Orient boss Jimmy Bloomfield thought the Town should have had a penalty late in the second half when Brian Stein was hauled down by Hughton.

Stein returned to the side after a two-match absence, and the forward line looked sharper and more menacing than it had done for a long time.

Bob Hatton and Steve Taylor would, like Stein, have figured on the score-sheet in a victory by six or seven goals but for the heroics of Jackson.

His only error was in the 27th minute, when the marking in front of him failed to stop Chris Turner getting free for a header from Mark Aizlewood. Jackson had saved brilliantly from Turner a few minutes before, but this time the ball slipped under his body into the net.

And Findlay deserved to join the celebrations which followed Hill's thrilling winner in the 88th minute. He chested down a hard pass from Stephens, moved a couple of yards forward to get away from his marker, and hammered a ferocious cross-drive into the net off the inside of the far post.

Findlay bears no grudge against the supporters — "idiots" was David Pleat's description of them — who jeered him after his early error.

"They've paid their money and they have the right to have their say," he said. "I was falling backwards as I went up for the cross, and I knew I was very near the goal-line. I bumped into the woodwork and that knocked the ball out of my hands. It was a mistake and I can't make any excuse."

"But they're fickle, aren't they? That penalty save changed their tune, but they weren't more pleased about it than I was."

LUTON TOWN 2, ORIENT 1 ~~2-2~~

Half-time: 1-1

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Aizlewood, Turner, Donaghy; Hill, West, Carr; Taylor, Hatton, Stein. Sub: Price, not needed.

ORIENT: Jackson; Fisher, Roffey, Gray, West; Grealish, Hughton, Coates; Chiedozie, Moores, Mayo. Sub: Whittle, not used.

THE GOALS: Ian Moores' gift for Orient, two minutes, after Jake Findlay dropped a cross by Roffey; Chris Turner, header, 27 minutes, from Mark Aizlewood's free-kick; Ricky Hill, 88 minutes, brilliant winner, after pass by Kirk Stephens.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town ten off target and eight saved, many of them brilliantly by John Jackson; Orient three saved and two off target.

REFEREE: John Sewell, Leicester: a late sub. Made incredible decisions in both penalty areas and neither manager was happy with his performance.

ATTENDANCE: 6,003 — just one higher than the previous lowest league gate of the season. I hope he enjoyed it . . .

ENTERTAINMENT: Far better than the average Orient match, with Jackson saving the Londoners from a hiding.

LUTON TOWN 3, BRISTOL ROVERS 1

Half-time: 3-0 79/80

TOWN: Findlay; Stephens, Donaghy, Saxby, Price; Grealish, Hill, West (Aizlewood, 68 mins); Stein, Hatton, Moss.

BRISTOL ROVERS: Thomas; Mabbutt, Bater, Aitken, Harding; Emmanuel, Barrowclough, Prince, Cooper; Denneby, Penny.

THE GOALS: Bob Hatton hat-trick — volley 19 minutes, headers 25 and 40 minutes; Gary Emmanuel for Rovers, 75 minutes.

OTHER GOAL ATTEMPTS: Town six saved and six off target; Bristol four saved and three off target.

ENTERTAINMENT: Scintillating excitement from the Town in the first half, so excellent that the second half was bound to be anti-climax.

ATTENDANCE: 8,507 — could any Second Division leaders expect lower gates?