

Dreaming of Wembley

THE PROSPECT of reaching Wembley in the spring was about the only one that pleased when the Town had their first experience of the Auto Windscreens Shield.

Manager Lennie Lawrence agreed that the first half had been uninspiring, but was content enough to win and consider the possibility of reaching the final of the knock-out tournament for lower league clubs.

And if Leyton Orient are typical of the opposition, the Town have every reason to believe they can go all the way. They travel to Northampton, also of the Third Division, for the next round on January 7, and then

Luton Town 2 Leyton Orient 1

need to win only two more to be in the southern area final. The winners of that two-leg fixture play at Wembley in April.

Orient had little to commend them other than massed defence. But the Town, with Kelvin Davis, Aaron Skelton, Darren Patterson and Des Linton included, were well short of the smooth flowing football we saw against Crewe a few days later.

Kim Grant hit the bar with a crackling drive from 20 yards before the

Town were caught by Orient's first genuine attack in the 27th minute.

A deep cross from the right by Justin Channing was met by a looping header by Colin West. It bounced off the bar, and Martin Ling converted from close range.

The smallest first-team attendance for 63 years created little atmosphere, and the below-par team performance failed to warm up the fans.

Grant and Bontcho Guentchev came in for sporadic abuse but the Town turned up the pace in the second half.

Midweek match details

LUTON TOWN: Kelvin Davis; James (Alexander 66 mins), Steve Davis, Patterson, Skelton; Linton, Hughes, Waddock (Showler 80 mins), Guentchev; Marshall (Oldfield 63 mins), Grant.

LEYTON ORIENT: Weaver; Hendon, Chapman, Joseph, Warren, Naylor; West, Ling, Arnott (Inglethorpe 87 mins), Channing; McGleish. Unused subs Clark and Winston.

THE GOALS: Martin Ling for Orient, 26 mins, close-range header after header by Colin West came back off the bar; Steve Davis for the Town, 51 mins, far post header from corner by Ceri Hughes; Kim Grant for the Town, 85 mins, header from Paul Showler's left wing cross.

OTHER STRIKES: Town five saved and eight wide; Orient one saved and three wide. Corners: 10-3 to the Town.

FOULS: 13 by the Town, 10 by Orient. **OFFSIDE:** Town 6, Orient 9.

BOOKED: Mark Warren of Orient for a foul on Dwight Marshall.

REFEREE: Mike Bailey, Cambridge.

ATTENDANCE: 1,594, lowest first-team gate since 1933.

ENTERTAINMENT: Very patchy, with Orient a poor side and the Town struggling to raise much enthusiasm.

Misery ended

Five corners in quick succession were beaten away by Orient, but they were hit by the sixth, Steve Davis going up on the far post to show the attackers how it should be done.

The header, from a flag kick by Ceri Hughes, eluded a mass of static defenders as it bounced downwards and into the net.

Grant put us out of our misery and the prospects of suffering 30 extra minutes on a very cold night with a winner headed in from a left wing cross by Paul Showler five minutes from time.

"We were delighted to see it go in and remove the possibility of extra time," said the manager.

It was a feeling shared by the rest of us. Ninety minutes was enough!