

TEN years ago Leyton Orient were Third Division (South) champions, and in 1962 they won promotion to the First Division for the first time in their history. Their stay in the top circle was as short as possible—just one season. Last month they were relegated to the Third Division, and have turned the full circle in just ten years.

It is strange that while Orient were being relegated last season two of their former players were helping their clubs win promotion. Right-back David Webb was transferred to Southampton just before the transfer deadline and in the last vital weeks played a big part in Southampton's success, and Len Julians was the key-man in Millwall's attack while the Lions were winning promotion to the Second Division.

Over these same ten years Leyton Orient have transferred many fine players, among them Vic Groves and Sean Charlton, both to Arsenal; Tom Johnston to Blackburn; Phil Woosnam and Alan Sessley, both to West Ham; Dennis Sorrell to Chelsea; Cyril Gordon Holland, Mal Lucas and Len to Norwich; and, of course, Len Julians (who left Orient to join Arsenal) and David Webb already mentioned.

If the O's had kept these players they may well have now been firmly established in the First Division instead of being back in Division III. True, in some cases the players left in exchange-for cash deals and the club bought other players, in others the players who were transferred returned to Brisbane Road, but the transfers upset the rhythm of the side and the new players did not always fit in.

I have heard Leyton Orient supporters complaining about the club transferring their stars, but

## An Orienta Decline . . .

they always overlook one thing—the reason why the club allowed them to go—and that reason is lack of support. The club has always rightly had the reputation of being fair and one which has always based its style on good football. Yet the club has never received the support due from spectators.

Club chairman is Mr. Harry Zussman, who is dedicated to the O's, and there was no question that he would rather have kept the players the club produced, but poor gates were the deciding factor in the players leaving.

Even when the O's won pro-

### Maurice Weedon Reporting

motion to the First Division their average attendance was only 14,013, while Liverpool, who went up with them, and Sunderland, who finished third, both had average gates of over 33,000. I know Leyton Orient do not have the football history of these clubs, but Brisbane Road is in the middle of a well-populated area, and their ground is just a couple of minutes' walk from several bus routes, is near the Underground station, and there are no travel difficulties for spectators.

Even for their first match in Division I, at home to Arsenal—surely the greatest game in Orient's history—the attendance was disappointing. At that time their ground record was 31,000 for an FA Cup match against Port Vale in 1954, but for the match against Arsenal the attendance was 10,000 below this figure, and their average home attendance for the season was 16,413.

The Leyton Orient Supporters' Club is a very lively organisation, which does much for the parent club, but apart from this hard-working band, the Leyton residents have not given the club the support it deserves.

If instead of moaning about the club selling players, the "why at home supporters" had attended matches the club would not have been practically forced to sell the players through poor gates.

Orient have always been a happy club who have given their players a fair deal. It was not a case of disgruntled players eager to get away, or a board of directors who were keen to boost the club's bank balance; they would rather have had the players than the cash—but it needs big money to run a League club. Orient face a stiff task in eventually regaining their First Division place and the fight can start with the supporters turning

up at matches in greater numbers thus giving the players encouragement towards the long climb back.



Brian Whitehouse, the extremely experienced Leyton Orient utility player, has helped in many prominent sides for other clubs. However, at Brisbane Road he is currently performing in a rather less happy, but more vital, cause—keeping the "O's" out of the Fourth Division. Whitehouse & Co. seem to be winning their battle, for the Orient have recently taken points from such formidable opponents as Q.P.R. and Swindon and are climbing away from the danger zone. (McLennan 1.)



George O'Brien

## INTENT ON STAYING UP— NOT GOING UP!

A COLOURFUL and varied career has found forward **Brian Whitehouse** attached to three promoted teams—**Norwich City, Wrexham and Crystal Palace**—at one time or another. But there's no chance of a fourth for him this time. His present club, **Leyton Orient**, are concerned solely with staying up and not going up.