

What makes a Soccer club sick?

THE first fan arrived soon after midnight. By dawn they were wound four-deep in a tight, expectant coil around the Soccer Stadium in London.

The date: February, 4, 1962.
The scene: Not Highbury or White Hart Lane—but Brisbane Road, home of unfashionable little Leyton Orient.
Orient, cockily and incredibly riding high at the top of Division Two and about to challenge the might of First Division Burnley in a Cup tie. Astonishing scenes—sawed wire ticklades, hundreds of police and Arthur Askey standing in the middle of the pitch as "packer".
Orient lost. But a little over two months later, on April 25, Malcolm Graham headed a winner past the Bury goalkeeper and burst into tears as Orient stormed into Division One.
Champagne flowed in the dressing room. Manager Johnny Carey, now with Nottingham Forest, recalls the scene.
I must have been looking a bit glum because the chairman, Harry Zussman, threw his arms around me and said: "Don't look so ruddy miserable. Have a drink."
I turned to him and said: "Mr. Chairman, your troubles are just beginning."



ARTHUR PAGE, chairman of Orient...
"If a few people had paid more attention to the club's interests and less to making it a place where the show world had an afternoon out, we'd still be among the top clubs. Sure, it was a great place for a drink and a chat. Big names all over the place. But where are they now?"

Behind the smiles . . .

Prophetic words. In five seasons Orient have sunk from the First Division to near the bottom of the Third. Their gates have slumped from an average 16,000 to 4,000. They are losing £500 a week and face immediate commitments of £20,000.
The overall at the bank would almost buy George Best.
From being the noisy, extrovert place where the famous gathered to watch the famous, the little stadium in the East End has become just another of Soccer's depressed areas—a place where brave smiles cover the smell of despair.
In five years there have been ruins in the boardroom, managers have quit or been fired, and players have demanded to leave. A chain in the terraced streets around Brisbane Road the fans who fed so eagerly on success have steadily deserted in their thousands.
Orient, basically, met Les Gore, the gate receipts were £265. Chelsea, on the same day, scooped in four times as much in PROGRAMME sales alone.
What went wrong at Leyton? How could a team in the First Division, United, West Ham, and Everton cutting their way to the top, lose its way so dramatically?
This is the story as seen by the men who worked that troubled stage during the five vital years. First—the managers.

JOHN CAREY, dismissed by Everton, joined Orient in July 1961 when they were in the Second Division.
I immediately stipulated I should have full control of team matters. This, I was given. I had no contract. I identified a team of—I suppose you could call them—mistifs.
They were players who hadn't done particularly well with other clubs. But I had Les Gore as assistant and Eddie Billy as coach and between us we weeded them into a useful side.
We won most of our matches by a single goal, kept clean sheets—and won promotion. No one was more surprised by that than I was.
I told the chairman his troubles were just starting and people thought I was being unduly pessimistic.
But I knew we hadn't a chance in the First Division with the team we had. I needed new and experienced men.
The directors took one look at the gates we were getting—and for a newly promoted side they were disappointing—and decided not to put money into the club.
I'm not criticising that decision but it means I could not get the men I wanted and when we came tumbling back down to the Second Division it was no more than I expected.

Friendly

I can honestly say I did not suffer from boardroom troubles. I had a free hand and the club was a friendly place with lots of showbiz characters around.
Despite the money worries it always had a reputation for wonderful hospitality.
I still have a soft spot for Orient and what has happened since is very sad.
Carey left to manage Nottingham Forest in August 1963. For a few months Les Gore stepped into the breach. But in November of that year, Orient appointed Benny Fenton from Colchester.
He stayed barely a year and was sacked.
FENTON says of Orient: "I think I could fairly say that my year there was the unhappiest one I have spent in football."
For one thing, it was becoming difficult financially and for another, I was never given the chance to do the job I went there to do.
"I was caught up in boardroom politics. The story of Orient would fill a book."
Fenton, who had been faced with transfer requests from four of his most experienced players, Malcolm Musgrove, Mal Lucas, Cyril Lea, and Syd Bishop, was rumoured to have fallen out with the board over his deep defensive tactics.
Fenton saw it as the only way to protect Orient's precarious League position.
But his sacking, three days before Christmas 1964, shocked the football world. He was given a £5,000 handout and left with nearly two years of his three-year contract to run.
Once again Les Gore stepped

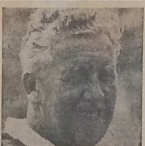
JOHNNY CAREY said on the day Leyton Orient went into the First Division: "Mr. Chairman, your troubles are just beginning."
Consider the prophecy today, almost five years later, as **JAMES DAVIES** continues this searching Express

QUOTE



"I was never given the chance to do the job I went there to do. I was caught up in boardroom politics"—**Ex-boss BENNY FENTON**.

QUOTE



"Orient's problems began when they went into the First Division. There was no money to support the extra cost involved"—**ex-Houdini LES GORE**.



DIVE TO DISASTER—FORESHADOWED BY EX-BOSS JOHNNY CAREY

'We hadn't a chance without money to buy players'



DAVE SEXTON . . . 'gamble that failed'



HARRY ZUSSMAN . . . the ebullient cockney



DICK GRAHAM . . . these ruthless cuts.

in as caretaker manager. But the next man as not for in severely testing the box seat.
DAVE SEXTON, who had been coaching Chelsea, got the job in January 1965.
Says Sexton of his 11 months there: "I was happy to have a go—but it was a gamble that just didn't come off."
"I had ideas but there was never the cash for me to do the things I wanted to do to get the men I wanted. After 11 months I had had enough."
Sexton quit with Orient losing £500 a week and anchored at the foot of Division Two. Some people on the board (especially Leslie Grade) pleaded with him to change his mind.
But the board had decided on economy measures—including pruning the playing staff by eight—a day after Sexton had gone into print saying: "It is not my intention to weaken the playing strength and Sexton felt a principle was at stake."

Sudden

For the sixth time in his 16 years with Orient Les Gore found himself bridging the gap.
He held the job—against his own wishes—until Dick Graham, formerly with Crystal Palace, was brought in in June 1966.
Gore stayed on as Graham's assistant until October when he was suddenly dismissed in a decision that decimated the playing and ground staff.
Some of Orient's directors were at a match at Colchester and did not even know Gore had gone.
LES GORE is now chief scout at Charlton and a happy man again. His view of Orient: "I was very bitter when they told me I was sacked. I used to sit at home and wonder where I'd

gone wrong. Time heals but after 16 years with a club you don't forget a thing like that.
Six times I was called in to do a Houdini act, and I think I could have done it again.
The team was doomed to relegation but I thought we had a side that would hold its own in the Third—one we could build on.
Basically Orient's problems began when they went into the First Division. There was no money to support the extra cost involved and the team wasn't good enough to support top-grade Soccer.

Control

But there was a fantastic atmosphere there and the chairman, Harry Zussman, was a tremendous personality. You knew he'd come into a room even if you had your back to him.
Carey was a grand manager—firmly in control. Of those who've been and gone since I think I feel sorriest for Fenton. Nothing he seemed to do ever met with approval.
I don't know what anyone can do for Orient now.

Orient in 1962 and 1967 provide fascinating comparisons.
A **DAILY EXPRESS** report of a "dry" draw with Liverpool—yes, Liverpool—in 1962 raves about "the spirit and determination of the men who so nearly potted Liverpool's defeat."
The 1967 match was a "pounding, ordinary outfit" and describes Liverpool as "a pair of the biggest pretensions in show business" fronted by Harry Harry Zussman, the ebullient Cockney. Zussman, they brought a "with showbiz panache to Brisbane Road."
The club was renowned throughout the League for its generosity to visitors.
So many top people and Jim stars packed the stands for home games that Saturday afternoon at the Leyton stadium was a fair description of what was the where Orient got wrong.
Two people who think so are chairman Arthur Page and current manager Dick Graham. Mayfair business man Page took over from Zussman as chairman in December last year after 18 years on the board.

Wrestling

Grade and Delfont had already resigned—Grade for health reasons and Delfont because of business commitments. Harry Zussman resigned after 18 years as chairman.
But Page had already assumed effective control, paying the players wages out of his own pocket and wrestling with debts that had soared to near £100,000.
Mr. Page, 58, talked frankly in his office.
"If a few people had paid more attention to the club and its interests and a bit less to making it a place where the show world had an afternoon out we'd still be among the top club."
I remember occasions when you could not get a drink in your own board room at half time for the film stars packing in there.
Oh, sure, it was a great place for a drink and a chat. Big names all over the place. But where are the big names now?
When I finally decided to do

something about it and take over, the club had immediate commitments of £40,000. I have got all I can into it.
There is hope. With a couple of good forward signings we could have a useful side. And I am hoping to persuade a couple of gentlemen to join the board who can put in some money and revitalise Orient.

MANAGER GRAHAM also feels there is hope.
"Mr. Page told me things were in a bad way when he brought me in as manager—that was the understatement of all time.
Now we have made ruthless cuts. We only have 14 professionals and no reserve team. This, of course, brings its own problems when you have a run of injuries like we've experienced this year."

Hang on!

"Our immediate objective is to survive, hang on to our Third Division place, and stay clear of injuries. If we can do that we can build out.
It's bloody difficult—but not impossible. If the board ever fail to understand what I'm doing or pressure me for results I might as well pack up. Fortunately they are backing me."
● **CASHING-OUT:** In 1963 Orient sold £21,000 worth of season tickets before the season began. The 1967 total—just £2,034.