



ABOVE: Mick Bullock (hidden) rises to send in a power header during Monday's game. BELOW: Bullock's up-raised arms register his frustration as the ball rebounds to safety off the crossbar.

No goals...but O's show they're set for Division Two

ORIENT 0, BRISTOL ROVERS 0

ORIENT fans got no goals for their money on Monday night. But they were treated to thrills galore and got further evidence that O's are ready for the step into division two.

Orient stood firm in face of a lively opening from Rovers—the best side seen at Brisbane Road this season and the division's highest scorers, with 67 goals.

Then they got into their stride to overrun Rovers and warm the 14,324 crowd with a fine display of open, aggressive football.

The crossbar and the lunging boot of Rovers' skipper Tony Ford deprived Mick Bullock of a couple of goals, and visiting 'keeper Rick Sheppard saw ceaseless action as O's piled it on.

But Rovers showed they knew a bit about this defending business and held out to take a point that few would begrudge them.

Giant pivot Larry Taylor—all six feet four inches of him—had a great match for Rovers, picking off most of the balls played through the air. But he was beaten twice, and Rovers had remarkable escapes.

Ten minutes before the break, Bullock came in behind the defence to climb high and smash a header from Mark Lazarus's free-kick against the underside of the bar.

Then Bullock got up well to Barry Dyson's corner midway through the second-half and saw his goalbound header hooked off the line by Ford.

Sheppard produced great saves from Mick Jones and Dick

Plume as Orient attacked with increasing frenzy in the closing minutes.

But the action was by no means confined to one end, and Rovers impressed with some quality football in the first-half.

Displaying the attacking style that has surged them up among the promotion contenders, and backed by a fine 4-2 win at Bradford City two days earlier, Rovers went forward at every opportunity.

BY JACK STEGGLES

They had no intention—until the later stages—of playing for a draw, and carved out a fine chance when a flowing movement sent Carl Gilbert free on the left.

Ray Goddard moved out to cut the angle, and Gilbert pulled his shot outside the far post.

A couple of misunderstandings late in the game caused Orient some anxiety, but the defence was generally in command of all situations.

Pick of the bunch was Peter Allen, who had a magnificent match. He belied his lack of inches by climbing well to win the ball in the air, and I cannot remember him coming off second best in the tackle.

Tommy Taylor snuffed out the threat of free scoring Robin Stubbs and full-backs Jones and Rofe contained the threat of lively wingers Graydon and Higgins.



Reserve run out for Mancini?

ORIENT skipper Terry Mancini rejoins the first team squad for full training on Monday and may play in the reserves against Colchester Colchester on Wednesday.

Manager Jimmy Bloomfield confirmed that Mancini is making good progress and the dominant centre-half should be back on first team duty in time for the three-match Easter programme.

The postponement of Wednesday's reserve game against Aldershot cost O's other injured star Dave Harper, the chance of an outing.

Bloomfield planned to play Harper in the second-half, with instructions to go flat out.

Malcolm Slater began light training after a long lay-off, then went down with a bout of flu. Notts County boss Jimmy Sirrel has asked Orient to let him know when Slater is fit again.

Orient have arranged their outstanding fixtures and now face a seven match programme in April. They meet Barrow at home on April 4 (6.30), Walsall (a) April 7, Rochdale (h) April 11 (7.30), Bradford City (a) April 15, Southport (h) April 20, Shrewsbury (h) April 25, Gillingham (h) April 27.

In midfield Dyson and Plume worked tirelessly, both going near with good efforts.

Orient: Goddard 6; Jones 8, Rofe 8; ALLEN 10, Taylor 9, Plume 8; Lazarus 6, Bullock 8.

Fairbrother 7, Dyson 8, Bra-brook 7.
Bristol Rovers: Sheppard; Ford, Munro; Roberts, Taylor; Jones, B.; Graydon, Jones, W. Stubbs, Gilbert, Higgins.

Battling Orient are back at the top

By STEVE ALLAN: Orient 0, Bristol R. 0

ORIENT lost their sporting touch against rival promotion hopes Bristol Rovers at Brisbane Road last night. But a goalless draw, fought at a blistering pace, is good enough to put them back at the top of Division Three.

Orient survived an early, and weighty onslaught from a fast, direct and dangerous Rovers attack.

For the first 30 minutes it looked as if the Londoners were heading for their first home defeat since they went down to Reading back in October.

But top scorer Mickey Bullock gave them heart when he headed a Lazarus free kick against the bar just after the half hour. From then on it was all Orient.

Escape

Rovers had another narrow escape in the 64th minute. Again the man involved was Bullock. He rose above the defence to whip a thundering header goalwards.

It looked certain to cross the line, but somehow defender Ford got his foot to the ball and stabbed it clear.

Orient really turned on the pressure near the end. Plume hit a long-range which Sheppard turned brilliantly for a corner, then Bullock diverted a Lazarus shot over the bar.