



# Leyton Orient Games of the Noughties

*Martin Strong*

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## **Leyton Orient Games of the Noughties** Martin Strong

The noughties were a totally unique decade in the history of East London's premier Football League team. In all of our 130 year life, never before had we been able to last a 10 year period when the two words 'financial crisis' were not mentioned at the club. It's fair to say that Bazza Hearn had introduced a financial stability almost unheard of at the Orient in our entire history, and most welcome it was too.

There were distractions aside from the football for O's to talk about – two new stands were built, not to mention the odd flat or two at the ground, but generally speaking the Leyton Orient faithful were able to concentrate, just for a change, on events that happened on the pitch.

And those happenings did not disappoint.

The 10 best noughties matches are captured here to bring back many a memory for all O's everywhere. Included of course, is that magical day at Oxford in 2006 giving us a first automatic promotion in 36 years. And there are the Cup classics with the unforgettable matches at Fratton Park and Craven Cottage in '02 and '06. There's our first visit to the New Den when we hit the Lions for five, not forgetting Steelo's hat-trick at Lincoln and the wonderful play-off semi-final second leg against Hull City.

Though all 10 games here have their own unique character, from the first against Newcastle to the last against Bradford City, it's fair to say there is one common denominator throughout – Matt Lockwood. Our full-back played in nine of the ten games and was without doubt our player of the decade. In all he played 377 games for the O's, scoring 56 goals, many of them of course penalties. Had he not left in 2007 he would surely have gone on to break Peter Allen's all time appearance record for the club. In much the same way as the fifties will go down as the Tommy Johnston era at the Orient, the noughties can surely be remembered as the 'Matt Lockwood decade.'

Along with Johnston, Peter Kitchen and Herb Albert, Matty can certainly take his place in the 'Leyton Orient Legends' club. Enjoy here his, and indeed Orient's, classic encounters of a riveting 10 year period.

Up the O's.

With photographs by Dave Winter.

About the author

Martin Strong was born a few miles from Brisbane Road and has supported the O's for 45 years. He has seen well over a thousand Leyton Orient matches, at over 130 different venues around the country since then.

'Games of the Noughties' is the follow-up to his first e-book, 'Games of the Nineties' which came out last year.

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