

YEOVIL Town's Board of Directors were meeting last night to discuss the future of player-manager Graham Roberts, who is poised for a move to Kettering. There will be a statement from the club this morning.

In a frank interview on the situation, chairman John Fry said he hoped the 37-year-old former England international would still be at the club when the dust settled.

But he warned "We are not having a pistol held at our heads".

John Lukins reporting

And although Mr Fry said he had supported Roberts all the way, his pre-meeting message was: "Don't play Dutch auctions with me. You have stood up in public and said you didn't want a contract, and you have also said you would die for this club. The time has come to put that into practice. I am not happy about some of the things that have been said recently. I don't like being treated in this way".

The chairman said that he had given Roberts a 12-month con-

tract, and he was on a very good salary. He said: "Everyone is behind him, and no-one is against him. We have been extremely patient and generous.

"We are still not out of the woods financially, but we have given the manager a good budget, and now we need to see the loyalty from him that we have shown. We can't operate if every five minutes someone gets up with a pistol".

Roberts took two days off following Saturday's controversial 3-0 defeat at Enfield, returning to lead his men - perhaps for the last time - at Boreham Wood on Tuesday (see report on page 85).

He was quoted last week as saying he wanted to stay but had to arrange security for his family, and a move to Kettering would involve a considerably longer contract than the one he now has at Huish Park.

Defeats

Although Mr Fry says he backs Roberts, he also points out that the three defeats Yeovil have suffered this season have been in the most important matches - two against clubs likely to be rivals for ICIS League promotion, and the other at Merthyr in the FA Cup "which cost us a lot of money".

In an ideal world I believe the majority of directors would have

liked to have seen whether Yeovil are promoted this season before talking long-term deals with Roberts.

I also believe that most of them realise that a change of manager at this stage of the season could be irreparably damaging to the promotion drive.

It is a point fans are already raising. One season ticket holder, Russell Foster, has written to Mr Fry on behalf of several supporters at his workplace. He says: "We cannot understand why either yourself, the board or the management team are allowing the current situation to occur if you all have the club's interest at heart.

"We cannot understand why, if all the relevant parties do not want the situation to happen, it is happening in the first place.

"We are top of the league, our gates are rising and the general feeling in the area is good. Please do not let what appears to be a set of personality clashes come between us and success".



● JOHN FRY - we've been generous

Is Ricketts being lined up to take over?

IT'S the sort of situation that can leave would-be prophets with egg on their faces - but don't be surprised if in next week's Gazette, or the one after, you see Tony Ricketts waving a Yeovil Town scarf.

I believe he is the man already earmarked to take over if Roberts departs today, writes JOHN LUKINS.

My information is that sources close to chairman John Fry have already been talking about Ricketts as the probable replacement.

He would be readily available as he has been playing for Brislington in the Somerset League since he parted company

with Bath City at the end of last season.

Ricketts had a spell as a player with Yeovil. He was signed by Gerry Gow, who broke the bank to get him to Huish from Bath. He was a firm favourite with the fans and a wholehearted centre-half.

Before Bath's demise, he achieved a fair amount of success there on a much smaller budget than Yeovil's and unearthed players of the calibre of Jerry Gill, Rob Cousins and Dean Birkby, all of whom are now with Yeovil.

But his playing style smacks more of Brian Hall than Roberts, and that might not meet with the fans' approval.

Roberts left for Kettering at 10am yesterday and was then driving to Yeovil. He understood he would be meeting with John Fry and football director Bryan Moore rather than the whole board.

He has heard comments from chairman Fry that appeared loaded against him and said: "I am disappointed that in over two weeks since this all started, no-one at Yeovil has come to me with an offer.

"I am not greedy, but my Yeovil contract runs to the end of this season. Kettering have offered me two and a half years. What would you or anyone else do in my situation?"