



CHAIRMAN PAGE last night: I feel as if I had been kicked in the teeth.

EX-MANAGER (supported, right, by his wife, Anne): The board refused to buy. To stay would be betrayal...



PICTURE BY JOHN KNOOTE

Graham leaves Orient

By **PETER CORRIGAN**

DICK GRAHAM withdrew his forceful personality from Orient's last stand yesterday because he has run out of ammunition. But his sudden departure from the Third Division club was attacked as desertion.

Orient chairman Arthur Page said: 'I am disgusted that he has walked out. It was a shabby thing to do. I feel as if I had been kicked in the teeth.'

Graham, whose name is already being considered at managerless Chester, answered:

I was prepared just to leave and say nothing about my motives for doing so. But now it seems I must defend my actions.

I have never walked out on anyone. If I wanted an easy way out I could have accepted a lucrative job in Los Angeles last week and I would have been far away from it.

Refusal

It first hit me that I had to leave about a week ago. We had been beaten in the Cup at Birmingham and lost a key player, Dave Harper, into the bargain.

I was left with 11 fit senior players and a few apprentices and colts.

Obviously I had to buy—and buy quickly. We had made £2,400 out of the Birmingham game. I began negotiations for Johnny Key of Coventry and a player from Chelsea.

They were worth £6,000 between them. I worked a deal to pay £1,500 down and the balance to be over a year.

I asked the board for permission to go ahead. I was told I couldn't. We must, they said, do the best we can with what we have.

What we had was 11

players. I had to put a kid in the side against Watford last Saturday. After 10 minutes he was kicked up in the air. I could have cried. That's the way young players get ruined.

I have driven my players further than any players have been driven. I have snarled and sworn at them. They have given the club every ounce.

I didn't feel I could ask these same players to enter the toughest stages of our relegation fight without any reinforcements.

The truth is that the club was relying on me to work a miracle. They are angry at me now because I have left, but perhaps it is the one way to force them to do something realistically about the position, to take a gamble.

Harsh

Don't forget I have just walked out on a contract that still had four years to run.

Four years—that is real security for a football manager. I have walked out on that without a thought of where I am going to go. If I had wanted to betray Orient I could have stayed, drawn my money—and waited for the miracle.

Graham has undoubtedly per-

formed a small miracle in keeping Orient alive for so long. But even after a long run of good results the danger is still real.

Trainer Peter Angell will take immediate charge of the team while the Orient board decide on a successor.

I feel that the way was open for Graham to be tempted back—but the harsh words of last night have completed the breach.

Chairman Page said: 'I am a reasonable man. If he had wanted some time off he could have had it. If he came back and wanted to reconsider his decision we would listen to him. But how can you feel confident after this walk-out?'

'We are hoping now to sign Key from Coventry and this club will live on, believe me.'

down badly. He asked

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN KNOOTE