

FOZZIE POINTS THE WAY!

SUPER SKIPPER STEVE Foster netted three vital points as the pressure of suspension was lifted from his shoulders for the first time in months.

Fozzie's second goal of the season was enough to ruin Hatters' old boy Bruce Rioch's first return to his old stamping ground.

The inspirational skipper has been playing on a knife's edge for months, needing just one more booking to earn a ban.

But after his killer second-half strike had dragged Hatters two places up the league, Foster admitted: "I've been worried about getting booked for 14 games, but the pressure was off today, because I would not have missed the semi-final if I had been booked.

"Today was the first time I've kicked someone for ages!" he joked.

Foster escaped that booking in the 32nd minute when referee Brian Hill let him off after a crude foul on Gary Gill.

Foster's confidence has been given a welcome boost by the arrival of ice-cool David Beaumont.

The £150,000 signing from Dundee United followed up last week's dashing debut at West Ham with a faultless first outing in English top flight soccer.

"Playing with David has made a big difference — he's a good player — and very similar to Mal Donaghy," said the skipper.

And Beaumont — whose regular flights home to his family could soon be a thing of the past if he completes on a house in the town — is equally at ease with Foster.

"It's great to be playing next to him, he's such a good player.

"I'm settling in fine and the defence seems to be getting on well.

"That's two clean sheets on the trot and long may that continue."



• Steve Foster.

TEAMS

LUTON: Sealey, Breacker, Grimes, Preece, Foster, Beaumont, Wilson, Wegerle, Harford, Hill, Black. Subs: Oldfield and McDonough.

BORO: Poole, Parkinson, Cooper, Mowbray, Hamilton, Palister, Slaven, Brennan (Kernaghan 83), Gill (Burke 83), Kerr, Ripley.

• Attendance: 8,187.

LUTON 1 MIDDLESBROUGH 0 By MICHAEL WEINSTEIN

Boro's patient style of soccer rarely tested Hatters on a day when both sides struggled to finish off some fine passing moves.

Midfielder Danny Wilson fired Hatters' best first-half chance but stand-in keeper Kevin Poole was up to the challenge.

Boss Ray Harford pushed Kingsley Black up front after the break and the tactic paid dividends in the 56th minute.

Mick Harford robbed

defender Gary Parkinson 10 yards into Boro territory and set Black away in full flow.

Poole pushed his long-range effort away for a corner but the visitors' relief was short-lived as the corner evaded everyone but Foster who nodded home unchallenged from five yards.

Poole saved twice from Mick Harford in the 62nd minute.

And Harford must have been cursing the Boro keeper when he denied him again five minutes later.