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'I'm going to miss him'

Michael Edwards

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Darren Locke will feel Ian Gayle's departure more than most.

The pair have formed a formidable centre-half partnership for St Albans City in the last two months of Gayle's loan from Dagenham and Redbridge.

While nine points from the 10 games they have lined up together aren't stellar numbers, two wins and a draw from the last five outings tell the bigger picture of a growing understanding between Locke and Gayle.

The partnership is over for now, though, after Gayle played his last game for St Albans on Valentine's Day, a 1-1 draw with Basingstoke Town at Clarence Park, see *inside for reaction*.

"I'm going to miss him. It's been a pleasure to play alongside him and I wish him all the best in the future," he said.

"He's been outstanding from the minute he came to the club. We've built up a good understanding over the past few weeks so it's a big loss but Omar was

Locke and Gayle's budding partnership broken by loan's end

brought in to be a centre-half and I have no doubt he can fill in and possibly do an even better job."

Just as Ben Martin's departure thrust Locke into a regular starting role, Gayle's will push Omar Beckles, the former Hornchurch defender, into the limelight.

Locke is confident Beckles will thrive and is looking forward to building a budding partnership over the last 11 games of the season.

"We've played a couple of games together and we've had a good understanding. We'll take that forward and build a good foundation for the end of the season and I look forward to playing with him next year.

"The aim for me and him is to get as many clean sheets as we can, build a solid foundation and push on for next year."



Sam Corcoran scored for St Albans City and put in a man of the match display in Saturday's 1-1 draw with Basingstoke Town at Clarence Park in the Vanarama Conference South.

Picture: LEIGH PAGE

Inside today



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Ewington helps Blueboys beat Hoddesdon - Page 50

Team wins for swimmers



St Albans swimmers came second overall at the Herts Secondary Schools Inter-District Championships.

St Albans District won two of the six team categories at the Herts Secondary Schools Inter-District Swimming Championships, held in Watford.

Led by captains Charlotte Fillmore, of Marlborough Science Academy, and St Albans School's Matthew Sherriff, the district won the junior boys (years 7-8) and the intermediate girls (years 9-10) competitions. The senior girls (years 11-13) came third.

The stand-out performers were Harriet Hanson, who achieved a record in the senior girls' butterfly, Reese Housden, who was first place in all of his three junior boys' events, and Katialin Dang,

who achieved two first places and a second in her three intermediate girls events.

In addition, the junior boys' and girls' teams won all their relays and the former won all their events except one.

Overall results showed that only a few points separated the top three districts, with St Albans District coming joint second with East Herts, very closely behind Watford.

"It was a fantastic achievement by all the team," said manager Andrew Ellis.

The best swimmers will represent the east region in the Inter-Divisional Championships in Sunderland in June.

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