

THE Goddard family has already supplied the AFL with a No.1 draft pick and potentially could provide another.

The Geelong Falcons have been given permission to play highly rated under-16 Hugh Goddard in their final two matches of the TAC Cup regular season, starting this Saturday against the Eastern Ranges at Simonds Stadium.

Goddard is the first cousin of St Kilda star Brendon, who was the top pick at the 2002 national draft and has gone onto play more than 200 games with St Kilda and been a dual All-Australian.

The Saints' utility has been giving his young cousin some guidance as his football career develops.

Falcons regional manager Michael Turner said Goddard would be the first under-16 to play with their side since Luke Hodge – another No.1 AFL draft pick – did so back in 2000.

The 194cm Goddard is not eligible to be drafted until 2014 but already has attracted plenty of interest from AFL recruiters.

Goddard was named Vic Country's Most Valuable Player at this year's under-16 national carnival in Sydney and Turner said he could play key position at either end of the ground.

“He's got a great attitude, he's very switched on, he can win the ball in the air and on the ground,” Turner said.

“He's a terrific left foot kick – he can already kick the ball 50-60m – he's very good at decision making and possesses all the athletic attributes that AFL clubs are looking for.”

Such is Goddard's commitment, the year 10 student travels down one night a week from Melbourne Grammar, where he is a boarder, to train with the Falcons.

“He's got a long way to go yet (before he gets drafted) but I think it will be good for him (to play out the rest of the season with the Falcons) because it will whet his appetite for next year to play in the TAC Cup and for Vic Country as a 17-year-old,” Turner said.

“We'll play him in our last two games and we can also play him in the finals, but that will be subject to form and if we make the finals.”

Goddard played all his junior football with Bellarine Football League club Geelong Amateur and last year represented Victoria's under-15 schoolboys side where he was named an All-Australian, earning a trip to South Africa.

Turner said Goddard's family were supportive of how the Falcons had handled his workload this year. His father Craig runs the business that is the club's major sponsor.

“We've been very open with his parents and said this was our plan for Hugh,” Turner said.

Brad Green