

THE Geelong Falcons TAC Cup season has come to an end after being eliminated from the finals by the Sandringham Dragons.

A four goal burst to start the game by Sandringham ultimately proved the difference as the Dragons moved into a preliminary final with a 11.12 (78) to 7.11 (53) win at Carlton's Princes Park.

In a scrappy match, Geelong struggled to kick goals for the first three quarters but its defence – led by Fraser Fort, Alex Hickey and Jayden McHenry – were outstanding to keep the side within striking distance at the final break.

The Falcons got within 13 points of the Dragons midway through the final term before two late goals by Sandringham sealed the 25-point victory.

Geelong had the majority of the play at the start of the last term but missed some relatively gettable shots that would have caused a few nervous moments in the Dragons' camp after they gave up a four-goal three-quarter time lead the previous week against North Ballarat.

Falcons coach Andy Allthorpe said his players realised they let an opportunity slip.

“They (Sandringham) looked really nervous and our boys were still running and they were starting to drop off,” Allthorpe said.

“We had a couple of shots at goal but we couldn't put the heat on them. The boys showed character and moved the ball through the corridor like we asked them to but we needed another goal just to put the pressure right on them.”

Co-captain Zak Sherman led from the front while ruckman Darcy Fort only enhanced his draft prospects for later in the year with another workman-like performance.



Aaron Christensen (#5) in action vs Sandringham

Photos courtesy of Brian Bartlett Photography



Darcy Fort (#50) contests the centre bounce vs Sandringham

Lewis Taylor and Doug Bond both booted two goals while Allthorpe liked the game of Aaron Christensen, who was lively up forward in the final term and kicked a clever goal.

“His defensive efforts in the second half were super and he was prepared to compete in the air,” Allthorpe said of Christensen.

More than half of the Falcons’ side yesterday were 17-year-olds, indicating to Allthorpe that the club has a highly-rated draft crop for next year.

However, he said it was disappointing to bow out of the finals race for the older players in the team such as Mason Wood – the Falcons’ leading goalkicker this season with 25 – Cam Williams, Josh Saunders, Darcy Fort and Sherman.

“We knew what we had was good enough (to win), we just didn’t take our opportunities,” he said.

“But all the boys who can play next year will be better for getting the opportunity to play two tough finals.”

“I’m definitely proud to have gotten this far but you could see in the boys’ faces after the game they knew they had a chance to pinch the match and keep going another week. That’s why it was disappointing to lose.”

MEANWHILE, Geelong West-St Peter’s midfielder Tom Gribble was rewarded for his consistent season by being named in the TAC Cup Team of the Year.

Gribble was the Falcons’ sole representative in the team named at the Morrish Medal count, earning a spot on a wing.

Brad Green

## SCOREBOARD

<b>Sandringham Dragons</b>	4	2	-26	5	6	-36	7	10	-52	<b>1112</b>	<b>-78</b>
<b>Geelong Falcons</b>	1	4	-10	2	7	-19	3	7	-25	<b>7 11</b>	<b>-53</b>

### **Sandringham Dragons**

**Goal Kickers:** Y. Zijai 2, C. Salem 2, T. Langdon 2, J. Kelly, J. Stewart, C. Banfield, K. Amon, M. Hayes.

**Best Players:** T. Langdon, C. Banfield, C. Mangoni, J. Wilson, K. Ong, C. Salem.

### **Geelong Falcons**

**Goal Kickers:** L. Taylor 2, D. Bond 2, T. Batarilo, S. Dixon, A. Christensen.

**Best Players:** Z. Sherman, D. Fort, D. Watson, L. Taylor, T. Gribble, A. Christensen.