

NEXT year's crop of potential draftees could trump the Geelong Falcons' all-time stellar classes, according to regional manager Michael Turner.

The Falcons 2001 and '09 group of draftees are widely regarded as the best to come from the TAC Cup club, but Turner declared 2013 could become the best of the lot.

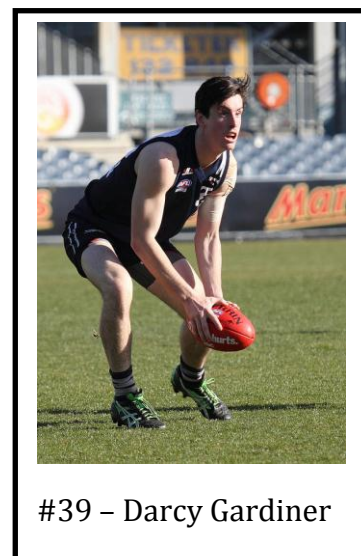
In 2001 the Falcons had the likes of Luke Hodge, Jimmy Bartel, Matt Maguire and Gary Ablett drafted to AFL clubs.

Between them that group boasts six premierships, two Brownlow and two Norm Smith medals, four AFLPA MVP awards, six club best and fairests and 10 All-Australian honours.

Hodge and Ablett are current captains of their respective teams.

The 2009 crop included rising stars Ben Cunnington, Gary Rohan, Jasper Pittard and Allen Christensen, who already has a premiership medal.

Four of next year's possible draftees have been named in the latest level two intake of the AIS-AFL Academy – Grovedale's James Tsitas, Queenscliff's Darcy Gardiner and Hampden duo Lewis Taylor – who could be snapped up in next month's Greater Western Sydney mini-draft – and Nic Bourke.



Turner said the Falcons had 15 bottom age players in their finals line-up, highlighting what an exciting group of talent coach Andy Allthorpe has at his disposal next year.

“The type of players that we’ve got are the types of players that AFL clubs are looking for,” Turner declared.

“Like tall defenders, really quick on-ballers and smart half back flankers. I’ve been doing this job for a long time and I can categorically say that next year’s crop is the best group of kids that we’ve ever had.

“We’ve got four kids in the (AIS-AFL) Academy and there’s 10 other kids who played (in the semi-final loss to Sandringham) that you’d rate just as highly.

“There’s also a whole range of 17-year-olds who didn’t play finals that are also very good players and our 16-year-old group (this year) is also very strong.”

Turner expects the Falcons to have up to six players in contention for this year’s drafts with ruckman Darcy Fort (South Barwon), key forward Mason Wood (Geelong Amateurs) and midfielders Josh Saunders (Ammos), Tom Gribble (Geelong West-St Peter’s), Daniel Watson (Cobden) and co-captain Zak Sherman (St Mary’s) attracting the most interest of AFL recruiters.

Key forward Sam Gordon, who started the year strongly with 18 goals in six games before returning to Camperdown, has been given an invite to next month’s state screening.

The 194cm Gordon, who kicked 42 goals in 13 appearances for the Falcons over two seasons, is rated a chance of being picked up late in the rookie draft.

“We might end up with three drafted and a rookie or two and that’s still a good performance,” Turner said of this year’s draft hopefuls.

Highly-rated key forward Hugh Goddard has been chosen in next year’s AIS-AFL Academy level one squad that will be coached by former Fitzroy and Brisbane Lions champion Chris Johnson and tour New Zealand in January.

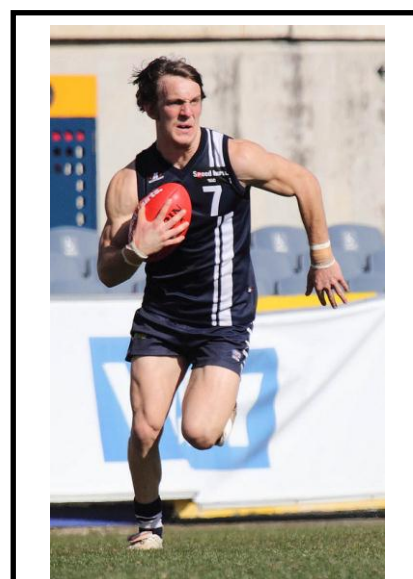
“He’s, potentially, a No.1 draft pick in two years time. I’ve always said that,” Turner said of Goddard.

“He played with us for the last two games of the season and that hasn’t been done since Luke Hodge (in 2000) to give him a bit of a look. But he’s got to grow into his body a bit more and keep on developing.”

Brad Green



#3 – Daniel Watson



#7 – Josh Saunders