

TOM Gribble should have no problems conforming to a set daily routine should he be lucky enough to find his way onto an AFL list next year.

The Geelong Falcons midfielder has lived with a strict regime after being diagnosed with diabetes at the age of nine.

Gribble must give himself daily insulin injections but said it's a routine that has helped him approach his football with a professional approach to his preparation to training and match days.

“It hasn't been a burden at all,” Gribble said.

“It's made me watch my diet more than any other kid and its made me get more out of myself.

“This year I've probably embraced it more than I have. I made a big emphasis on trying to get that perfect professionalism and discipline into my game like an AFL player would.”

Gribble has never let the illness get in the way of his football career, which began at junior level with GFL club Geelong West-St Peter's.

His game excelled this season with the Falcons. He averaged 28 possessions, five marks and three tackles a game and was rewarded with a spot on the wing in the TAC Cup Team of the Year.

He's favourite to win the Falcons best and fairest award later this month.

In the Falcons' elimination final win over Murray, Gribble racked up a staggering 40 touches.

Gribble, who turns 18 in just over a fortnight, has attracted the interest of AFL recruiters and is among six Falcons attending this week's AFL Draft Combine and state combine session in Melbourne.

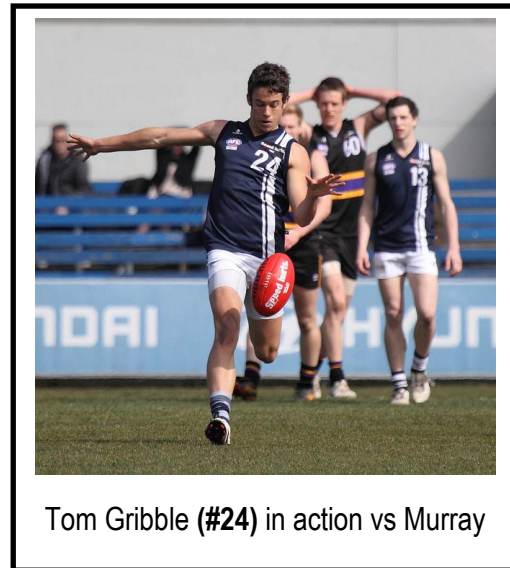
Gribble said he's spoken to six AFL clubs since the Falcons season ended in the semi finals with the feedback very encouraging for his draft prospects.

“They (recruiters) say they see me as having a high work rate, which is what they look at these days along with good ball-winning ability,” Gribble said.

“They think I make pretty good decisions when I've got the ball in my hands.”

Gribble is a Carlton fan, so it's not surprising that he models his game on two of the Blues top midfielders in Kade Simpson and Marc Murphy.

His father Andrew was also a more than handy player, winning two club best and fairest awards at South Barwon (1993) and the following year at the Roosters.



Tom Gribble (#24) in action vs Murray

He was also drafted by Geelong in the 1988 national draft and played in a SANFL grand final with West Adelaide.

Gribble said his dad had played a big influence on his career, urging him to make the most of his opportunity to improve his game in the elite program offered by the Falcons.

“He made a point about having no regrets about what you do, but at the end of the day he left it up to me,” Gribble said.

“I was self-driven to really make the most of my time here and get the most out of myself, just getting first to training, being the last to leave, making the most of the facilities that we’ve got on offer down here.”

After attending the draft combine on Saturday, the Year 12 St Joseph’s College student will concentrate on completing his exams before turning his attention to AFL draft time.

Gribble will be joined by Falcons’ teammates - St Mary’s Zak Sherman, Geelong Amateur’s Josh Saunders and Camperdown key forward Sam Gordon - at the one-day state combine on Saturday.

South Barwon ruckman Darcy Fort and Ammos’ key forward Mason Wood have been nominated to attend the three-day national draft combine, which starts on Tuesday.

At both combines, players will be put through a range of fitness and agility tests under the watchful eyes of AFL coaches and recruiters.

“At the end of the day it’s all about how you’ve performed this year,” Gribble said.

“But you need to show that you’ve still got that fitness level at the end of the year. Hopefully I’ve at least maintained my levels from the start of the year, if not improved on them a bit.”

Brad Green