

TWELVE months ago AFL recruiters viewed Geelong Falcons youngster Fraser Fort as a developing key defender. Eligible for the AFL national draft this year, Fort showed that he's added another string to his bow over the summer by shifting forward to steer the Falcons to an opening round win over the Murray Bushrangers.

Fort booted three goals in the 10.16 (76) to 9.4 (58) win at Craigieburn. As a 16-year-old, Fort played 12 TAC Cup games last year. He turns 18 in October. Falcons coach Andy Allthorpe said the 196cm Fort was highlighting his versatility to AFL clubs.

“His marking ability is super and the way he positions his body as a key forward is great,” Allthorpe said. “He just needs to work on his kicking a bit at the moment. For his development, we've pushed him forward to really challenge him and we're giving him the best chance to show (AFL recruiters) he can play at both ends of the ground. “The coaching staff is looking forward to watching him develop as the season progresses.”

After a slow start, the Falcons overpowered Murray and, if not for inaccurate kicking, could have won by more. Allthorpe said Sam Russell and Alex Moloney were resolute in defence while Reid Adams, the younger brother of GWS star Taylor, won a lot of the ball when the Falcons started to control the match in the midfield. “It was a really good four quarter consistent effort,” Allthorpe said of the three-goal win.

The Falcons travel down to Warrnambool next Sunday for a clash against neighbouring rivals the North Ballarat Rebels. Both matches between the two clubs last year were decided by less than a kick – the Rebels winning in Warrnambool by two points in round three and the Falcons got home by five points later in the season.

MEANWHILE, Darcy Gardiner has enhanced his draft prospects after winning the inaugural MCC President's Medal as the best player for the AIS-AFL Academy in its match against Collingwood's VFL side. The match was played as a curtain raiser to the Carlton-Richmond game at the MCG last Thursday night.

The medal was chosen by the Academy coaching staff – Michael O'Loughlin, Glen Jakovich, Matthew Lloyd, Brad Ottens, Brad Johnson and Tadhg Kennelly. The Academy squad, that also features Falcons' Lewis Taylor, Nic Bourke and James Tsitas, is now in Europe for a 15-day tour.

Brad Green

## SCOREBOARD

TEAM	Q1	HT	Q3	Final Score
Geelong Falcons	1 5 (11)	3 8 (26)	8 13 (61)	10 16 (76)
Murray Bushrangers	2 0 (12)	6 2 (38)	8 2 (50)	9 4 (58)

### Geelong Falcons

**Goal Kickers:** F. Fort 3, P. McCartin 2, K. Spokes, M. Thompson, J. Sharp, S. Dixon, D. Bond.

**Best Players:** S. Russell, A. Moloney, F. Fort, J. Nelson, R. Adams, D. Lang.

### Murray Bushrangers

**Goal Kickers:** J. Neagle 2, M. Gibbons, L. Devine, D. Van Berlo, L. Vescio, R. Norris, N. Drummond, D. Wilson.

**Best Players:** N. Holman, B. Squire, J. Sharp, J. Neagle, M. Gibbons, D. Wilson.