

## *Pioneers Push Falcons to the Limit*

IT'S very rare for a coach to be unhappy after he's just watched his side win and continue their unbeaten start to the season. But that was exactly how Geelong Falcons coach Andy Allthorpe felt after watching his side scrap to a nine-point win over the Bendigo Pioneers in the latest round of the TAC Cup.

The victory leaves the Falcons two games clear on top of the ladder after seven matches. Such is the high standards Allthorpe and his coaching staff have set for the team, the players were given a blunt assessment following the game at Craigieburn about what's expected of them over the coming months.

"I was pretty honest with them afterwards about where I feel we're at," Allthorpe said after the 9.11 (65) to 8.8 (56) win. "We're struggling a bit at the moment with the way we're going about certain parts of our game. (But) there's a fair bit of improvement still left there. This (game) was a reality check for the boys. We've got a lot of things to work on and focus on.

"The big thing that we can take out of it is if you don't play your role or to the systems we've got in place, you're going to get beaten and opposition teams will hurt us."

Early on it looked as though the Falcons were going to cruise to another easy win after they booted the first three goals of the game – even with six players away on Vic Country duties up in Darwin.

After that, they struggled against the intensity and pressure of their Bendigo opponents who fought their way back into the game through hard work. "They were working harder in the middle quarters both ways and were getting the rewards for that," Allthorpe said.

"Darcy Gardiner really steadied the ship down back for us and we had to really fight hard at the end to win the game." The Falcons led by 20 points at half-time but had that lead cut to just seven heading into the final term.

In his first match with the Falcons in 18 months, Meyrick Buchanan booted three second half goals to show he'd lost none of his class and skill in his time away from football. Equally impressive was what Buchanan did when he didn't have the ball in his hands.

He worked hard to give his teammates space inside their forward line by laying tackles and bumps on the Bendigo defenders. It's easy to forget that Buchanan was named the Falcons best player in their 2011 finals campaign.

Allthorpe said it was "almost like his first practice game" for Buchanan and expects him to get better once he gets used to the speed and intensity of the competition. "In the first half he was still finding his feet. In the second half he stepped up and was pretty dangerous," Allthorpe said. "This was just a chance to get him out there and used to the intensity."

Billy Beardsell, George Cameron and Luke Davis continue to impress in their development while James Tsitas and Lewis Taylor only keep enhancing their AFL draft prospects.

The Falcons meet the Sandringham Dragons this Saturday at Werribee's Avalon Oval.

*Brad Green*

### **SCOREBOARD**

	1QT			HT			3QT			Final Score		
<b>Bendigo Pioneers</b>	1	3	-9	2	4	-16	6	7	-43	8	8	-56
<b>Geelong Falcons</b>	4	4	-28	5	6	-36	7	8	-50	9	11	-65

#### **Bendigo Pioneers**

**Goal Kickers:** B. Poyser, H. O'Meara, R. Harvey, F. Payne, J. Ryan, B. Heeps, I. Miller, H. Conway.

**Best Players:** J. Chisari, L. Barrett, I. Miller, S. Heavyside, F. Payne, D. Jones.

#### **Geelong Falcons**

**Goal Kickers:** M. Buchanan 3, M. Boag 2, L. Taylor, N. Bourke, D. Gardiner, T. Mathieson.

**Best Players:** B. Beardsell, G. Cameron, L. Davis, D. Gardiner, J. Tsitas, L. Taylor.