

Falcons Overcome Gallant Pioneers

THE Geelong Falcons were given a scare before virtually cementing top spot ahead of the TAC Cup finals with a hard-fought win over the Bendigo Pioneers.

In a topsy turvey match in Bendigo, the Falcons trailed the Pioneers by three goals late in the second term and led by more than four goals in the final quarter before holding onto win 13.10 (88) to 13.6 (84).

Exciting young forward Pat McCartin booted seven goals for the Falcons with key big man Fraser Fort chipping in with three. The win keeps the Falcons two games clear on top of the TAC Cup ladder with two games left in the regular season.

But coach Andy Allthorpe said the lowly-ranked Pioneers took it right up to the Falcons. "We just did enough (to win)," Allthorpe said of the result.

"It was a good learning experience because they came out and played the way we thought they would play, uncontested footy. So it was a good test for our accountability and it was just a pass in that area. "There's different areas in our game that we need to get better in going forward."

In windy conditions, the Falcons failed to make the most of their use in the opening term and Bendigo made them pay by getting away to a three-goal lead in the second term. But the Falcons rallied to bridge the gap to a point at the main break.

Then, after booting four points to start the third term, the Falcons found their radar and booted six goals to open up a 28-point lead heading into the final quarter. The Pioneers charged home in the last term but the Falcons were able to hold on for a four-point win.

The 17-year-old McCartin is the second Falcons player to boot seven goals this season, following Scott Dixon's haul against Eastern last month. Allthorpe said McCartin and Fort defied the conditions to dominate.

"Considering it was windy I can't believe how many goals we got from the big guys," he said. "Patty clunked everything and 'Frase' was good in the air and on the ground. He just wants to compete for everything."

"We've got to get the balance right (of big forwards going into the finals). We can't go to big and the key for us is, if things aren't going well, we need to be able to throw players around and we've done that with the boys."

Co-captain Alex Hickey was the Falcons best and Allthorpe said he looked settled playing across half-back. "He was really purposeful with his approach in his kicking and he was super clean the way he used the footy," Allthorpe said of Hickey's performance.

“He was keen for a big game because he’s been disappointed with his last few weeks.”

Billy Beardsell was again lively up forward, booting two goals to take his season tally to 17 from 12 matches while Willis Flanders and Nick Dixon were also prominent.

The Falcons have a bye this weekend with their next game against the Calder Cannons at Geelong’s Simonds Stadium on Saturday, August 17.

Allthorpe admitted the Falcons may have “gotten ahead of themselves” on Saturday thinking about the finals. “We need to keep them really focused, understanding there’s still plenty for us to work on,” Allthorpe said.

“We need to get them through the next eight quarters and then get stuck into the finals.”

Brad Green

SCOREBOARD

	QT	HT	3QT	Final Score
Bendigo Pioneers	2.2 (14)	6.3 (39)	8.3 (51)	13.6 (84)
Geelong Falcons	2.1 (13)	6.2 (38)	12.7 (79)	13.10 (88)

Bendigo Pioneers

Goal Kickers: S. Heavyside 4, D. Paterson 2, B. Spurr 2, B. Edwards, J. Chisari, L. Barrett, J. Mangan, J. Mc Grath.

Best Players: S. Heavyside, T. Cole, I. Miller, J. Mangan, J. Chisari, J. Sheahan.

Geelong Falcons

Goal Kickers: P. McCartin 7, F. Fort 3, B. Beardsell 2, W. Flanders.

Best Players: A. Hickey, P. McCartin, F. Fort, W. Flanders, B. Beardsell, N. Dixon.