

'Fabulous Five' Falcons Join AFL Academy Squad

FIVE of the Geelong Falcons top draft hopefuls in 2014 and 2015 have been chosen in the latest intake of the AIS-AFL Academy squads.

They are among a group of 61 players from across Australia to receive a scholarship for the Academy's 17th intake where they will have four training camps and head on an overseas tour next year.

Former Sydney Swans star Michael O'Loughlin will be in charge of the Level Two squad that includes promising key forwards Hugh Goddard – touted as the No.1 pick in next year's AFL national draft – and Patrick McCartin and hard-running defender Jackson Nelson.

That squad will tour Europe for three weeks next April.

McCartin and Goddard are among the best key forward prospects for the 2014 draft.

McCartin, 17, has booted 14 goals in five TAC Cup appearances this season – including a bag of seven in the Falcons win last round over the Bendigo Pioneers.

Goddard, who played in the TAC Cup as a 16-year-old last season, has kicked 10 goals in four matches this season when he's available from his school football commitments. The 17-year-old won the Cameron Ling Medal with the AIS-AFL Academy's Level One squad earlier this year.

Falcons' AFL Talent Manager Michael Turner said Goddard would be available for their final two regular season games and then the finals campaign.

The Level One squad, being coached by three-time Brisbane Lions premiership player Chris Johnson, includes two Falcons who were among the best players for Vic Country at this year's under-16 national titles in Sydney – Darcy Parish and Rhys Mathieson.

The 16-year-old Mathieson won the Kevin Sheehan Medal for the best player at the carnival.

Since the AIS-AFL Academy started in 1997, 33 graduates have played in an AFL premiership, 25 have been named an All-Australian at least once, 18 have won their club's best and fairest, 11 have been the No.1 draft pick, four have won the AFL's Rising Star and three have won the Norm Smith Medal as best-on-ground in the AFL Grand Final.

In 2013 there are 204 AIS-AFL Academy players on AFL lists who have played a combined 13,827 AFL games and kicked 9507 goals.

Sheehan, the AFL's National Talent Manager, said the Academy program prepares players for the rigours of AFL football.

"The players will experience elite training and mentoring that will help their development both on and off the field. Both squads will also represent their country overseas which is unique in our game," Sheehan said.

"We are constantly striving to give the players the best preparation for life as a professional athlete."

Meanwhile Falcons half-forward Doug Bond has had his draft prospects for this year boosted after he was among 28 players nominated for October's Academy Bidding draft meeting.

Bond, who is originally from the New South Wales town of Deniliquin, is doing year 12 at Geelong Grammar and will be available to any of the 18 AFL clubs during the bidding process. He was part of the GWS Giants Academy.

After an encouraging debut season with the Falcons last year, where he kicked 14 goals from eight matches, a shoulder injury has limited Bond to just four games in 2013. He made his comeback in last round's win over the Pioneers.

"There's been AFL recruiters speak to us about Doug so these next blocks of games are very, very important for him," Turner said.

The Falcons have a bye this weekend with their next match against the Calder Cannons at Geelong's Symonds Stadium next Saturday afternoon.

Brad Green