

Ranges Conquer Falcons – Season Over for Geelong

THEIR premiership quest might be over but Geelong Falcons coach Andy Allthorpe declares the success of their season will be judged after the AFL national draft. The Falcons went down to the Eastern Ranges by 37 points in a physical Preliminary Final at Carlton's Visy Park on Saturday.

While disappointed not to have qualified for their first TAC Cup Grand Final in more than a decade, Allthorpe said ultimately the team would be judged on how many players they provide to AFL clubs through the national and rookie drafts.

The Falcons have somewhere between six to eight genuine draft prospects – and a batch of promising key forwards who will be keenly sought after when eligible next year. Allthorpe said they were outplayed by the Ranges after quarter-time in the 17.15 (117) to 11.14 (80) defeat.

“It was certainly a frustrating and disappointing end,” Allthorpe said. “Once Eastern fell onto our side of the draw we knew it would be a tough Preliminary Final. A Grand Final (appearance) was going to be the only way we could reward ourselves for the effort we'd put in all year.

“They kept it (margin) two goals for most of the day after quarter time. Every time we would get one (goal) they would get one back straight away so we could never get the game played on our terms. “But they are a great bunch of kids and they gave their all but we just weren't good enough on the day.”

The Falcons cause wasn't helped with several players suffering serious injuries throughout the game. Morrish medallist George Cameron hurt his ankle in the second term and played the game out with it strapped up, but had little impact.

Darcy Gardiner, Sam Russell, James Tsitas and Nick Bourke were all forced off the ground at some stage after copping big hits from their Ranges opponents. Allthorpe was full of praise for the way his team fought out the match. At three-quarter time they trailed by just 11 points and Allthorpe believed they could run over the top of Eastern in the final term.

“But we missed a couple of opportunities and they took theirs and started to break the game open,” Allthorpe said. “When we got four goals down and there wasn't much time left, we knew it wasn't going to be our day. Our guys just ran out of petrol tickets in the finish.

“Those (injured) boys have plenty of resilience and character. They tried to stay in the game and give us a chance. They were disappointed that they couldn't get the job done.”

The Ranges went into the match without star players Mitch Honeychurch and Tom Boyd but the Falcons couldn't contain Eastern's leading forward Christian Petracca, who booted five goals, and Matthew Traynor, who chipped in with four.

"He (Petracca) was definitely a handful. We tried four guys on him and no one really looked assured down there," Allthorpe said.

Key forwards Patrick McCartin and Hugh Goddard each booted three goals for the Falcons. McCartin took 12 marks and finished the season the Falcons' leading goalkicker with 21.

Co-captains Alex Hickey and James Tsitas – who had 12 possessions in the opening term – tried hard to inspire their teammates all game. Sam Russell battled gamely in defence while Teia Miles and Billy Beardsell had strong patches throughout the game. Big man Luke Davis produced another solid performance in what's been a consistent season.

McCartin and Goddard head a list of exciting players that will be back at the Falcons next season. Allthorpe's final message to the playing group after the match was one of admiration mixed in with an opportunity missed. "Over the year they have all been fantastic," Allthorpe said.

"The way that they've stood up and the efforts that they have put in has been phenomenal. But it all comes down to how our season ended and it was sad the way that it finished.

"Everything that we've done has gone to waste."

Brad Green

SCOREBOARD

	QT	HT	3QT	Final Score
Geelong Falcons	3.3 (21)	5.9 (39)	9.13 (67)	11.14 (80)
Eastern Ranges	3.5 (23)	7.10 (52)	11.12 (78)	17.15 (117)

Geelong Falcons

Goal Kickers: P. McCartin 3, H. Goddard 3, B. Beardsell, A. Christensen, J. Maishman, S. Dixon, G. Cameron.

Best Players: A. Hickey, P. McCartin, T. Miles, S. Russell, B. Beardsell, L. Davis.

Eastern Ranges

Goal Kickers: C. Petracca 5, M. Traynor 4, J. Crowe 2, M. Apeness 2, D. Welsh, N. Evans, T. Cody, S. McInerney.

Best Players: C. Petracca, C. O'Sullivan, J. Belo, B. Cavarra, M. Keedle, J. Fisher.