## Preview: Eastern Ranges v Gippsland Power

**By Nick Brown**

**WHERE AND WHEN:** Traralgon Recreation Reserve, Sunday June 29, 1pm

This is an extremely important match for the Eastern Ranges who after suffering consecutive losses have slipped down three spots on the ladder from fourth to seventh.

The Ranges must break their two-game losing streak to avoid losing touch with the top four.

Given their higher placing on the ladder and season for so far, the Ranges will start favourites, but know that the Gippsland Power will come to play.

The Power are coming off a solid 34-point over the Bendigo Pioneers last Saturday, and will be hoping to string together back-to-back wins.

**LADDER**

**Eastern Ranges:** 7th (5-5)

**Gippsland Power:** 13th (2-8)

**FORM**

**Eastern Ranges:** WLL

**Gippsland Power:** LLW

**LAST THREE MATCHES:**

**Eastern Ranges**

Eastern Ranges 12.9 (91) lt Western Jets 13.7 (85).

Eastern Ranges 5.9 (39) lt Queensland Scorpions 14.12 (96).

Eastern Ranges 13.15 (93) d Geelong Falcons 7.8. (50).

**Gippsland Power**

Gippsland Power 11.16 (82) d Bendigo Pioneers 7.6 (48).

Gippsland Power 11.9 (75) lt Dandenong Stingrays 15.10 (100).

Gippsland Power 11.9 (75) lt Calder Cannons 13.15 (93).

**PLAYERS TO WATCH:**

Sometimes in the TAC Cup it is the bottom-aged players that are the ones to watch and this week it is the case.

The two players to watch in this game are Blake Hardwick from the Ranges and Nash Holmes from the Gippsland Power.

The two midfielders are very similar players and have a lot in common.

**Blake Hardwick (Eastern Ranges):** He has been ‘Mr Consistent’ for the Ranges this season, and despite this being his first game since having his mullet cut off, his solid form is set to continue.

The tough midfielder attacks the ball with little fear and is also a very strong over head mark who wins plenty of one-on-one contests.

It’s not only around the ground that Hardwick is important for the Ranges, but his ability to drift forward and find the goals is another strength of his.

**Nash Holmes (Gippsland Power):**  Holmes is almost the Power’s version of Hardwick, in so many ways.

Last year he was a part of the Vic Country Under-16 side that took out the title, which proves he is a quality player.

Holmes is a hardworking midfielder who also goes forwards, and when he does he kicks goals regularly.

He is regarded as a ‘ball magnet’ and that tag seems warranted as he has been named in his side’s best players in five of his seven games this season.

It’s his in and under style, ability to gather plenty of the ball and kick goals that make him so important to Gippsland and so dangerous to the Eastern Ranges.

**QUESTION MARKS?**

Can the Ranges end their two-match losing streak?

Will the Power make it back-to-back wins?