

Falcons To Open 2014 TAC Cup Season in Camperdown

THE quality of depth to the Geelong Falcons list will be tested during the 2014 TAC Cup season declares coach Andy Allthorpe.

The Falcons begin their campaign on Sunday against neighbouring rivals the North Ballarat Rebels down at Camperdown's Leura Oval.

With three players involved with the AIS-AFL Academy, nine already named in Vic Country's squad for this year's AFL under-18 national championships and 13 involved in the APS competition, Allthorpe said the opportunity for game time is virtually open to every person in their squad.

"The top end talent, 26 to 30 players, is fantastic," Allthorpe said. "A lot of kids are going to get a lot of opportunities to get exposure to TAC Cup footy to develop and the more they play, the better they're going to get and it will hold them in good stead for next year.

"That's what our program has always been about - balancing out that list to give kids a chance to develop over their first year and grow into really good players in the second."

Key forwards Hugh Goddard and Patrick McCartin, along with Jackson Nelson head overseas with the AIS-AFL Academy after this weekend. McCartin and Goddard - both rated among the top key forward prospects in this year's AFL national draft - are unlikely to be seen in a Falcons jumper during the first half of the season.

The Falcons have dominated the make-up of the Vic Country squad in recent years and Allthorpe said their intake this season could increase if players begin the season in strong form. "They've already had one camp and that nine should put pressure on to play," he said.

"There's a couple of others there who, if they start the year well, they'll be added through performances."

The Falcons and Rebels will also meet later in the season in Warrnambool, which is now part of North Ballarat's region. Allthorpe said the Rebels will be a tough opponent for his side first up, having beaten the Falcons in a recent practice match.

"They look really quick and have a couple of dangerous small and tall forwards," he said. "They got us in the end up at Ballarat in our first hit-out. We started really well but they ran over the top of us so it's going to be a really good game.

"There's definitely a good rivalry there."

Brad Green