

Dogs out of bark

Finals loss to Kangaroo Flat could be Gisborne's last in the Bendigo league

Bendigo football | Paddy Higgs

GISBORNE may have played its last game in the Bendigo Football League after exiting the finals on Sunday.

The Bulldogs fell to Kangaroo Flat by 57 points in the first semi-final, inevitably paying the price for a scoreless opening quarter from which they could not recover.

Gisborne's form leading into finals had been patchy at best, with solid wins over Castlemaine and Strathfieldsaye overshadowed by big losses to South Bendigo (87 points), Eaglehawk (49) and Golden Square (160).

The Bulldogs' inconsistency followed them come final, with defeat against Golden Square and Kangaroo Flat on Sunday ensuring they bowed out of the finals in straight sets.

The Kangaroo Flat loss at Queen Elizabeth Oval could be the club's last game in the Bendigo league, having been heavily courted by the Ballarat Football League for a switch across.

Against the Kangaroos, the Bulldogs never recovered from a scoreless first term in which they conceded a 42-point lead.

They made some inroads in the second term to briefly raise hopes

of a comeback, but when Flat fired again in the third quarter the result was assured.

Kangaroo Flat managed 10 goals in the second half compared to the Bulldogs' paltry three.

Gisborne only had seven less shots than its opponent, but its dependence on Darren Farrugia (four goals to be his side's best) was unhealthy.

Having just three goal-kickers told the story for the Bulldogs.

Ollie Messaoudi – a leading best-and-fairest candidate for Gisborne – typically never gave up the chase, while Scott Walsh and Ryan Webster battled away.

But the Bulldogs had no answer to Kangaroo Flat match-winner Justin Maddern.

The prolific forward – 91 goals to his name this season and comfortably in front on the goal-kickers chart – added another six to his tally in a profound performance.

There was some good news for Gisborne in the reserves' 26-point win over South Bendigo, which puts the Dogs in the grand final.

In a tight encounter, Gisborne won the arm-wrestle courtesy of a six-goal last term.

David Pante was the Bulldogs' best, with plenty of support from Jacob Forder and Kane Grbac.