Vinnie Flood first joined the Bendigo Pioneers program in the Under 16 carnival, before making his TAC Cup debut for the Pioneers as a bottom-ager in the 2011 season. The entrepreneurial half-forward/midfielder kicked 8 goals in 25 games for the Pioneers.

*Adam Langenberg* caught up with Vinnie Flood and talked Grand Finals and his ambition to play in the VFL.

Q: Hi Vinnie. Where do you play footy these days?

Vinnie Flood: I’m still down at Strathfieldsaye Storm. We were lucky enough to get up to the Grand Final last year, but just couldn’t get over the line.

Q: You’ve signed on with the Storm for 2014 then?

VF: Yeah. I would have loved to have a crack at VFL, but I just wanted to try and win a premiership with Strath before I leave. That’s one of the main reasons I’m staying at Strath for another year.

Q: Have you had any interest from the Bendigo Gold?

VF: I had a big chat to Aussie (Bendigo Gold coach Austinn Jones) after my time at the Pioneers and another pretty big chat to Aussie after the Grand Final last year. I just thought that the success of actually winning a Grand Final came before playing at the next level.

Q: How are Strath looking for this year?

VF: Hopefully we should be pretty good. We’ve got a pretty good mixture of young talent coming through, and a couple of recruits from Melbourne.

Q: How’d you go personally in 2013?

VF: I was pretty happy with my year. My time at the Pioneers set me up well; I’m eager to succeed and have a good fitness base. From having those pre-seasons I was able to transition to senior football pretty swiftly.

Q: What’s the big difference between senior footy and the TAC Cup?

VF: TAC Cup’s a lot faster, with the slighter bodies and the pace of it. Senior footy’s a bit more physical in and around packs, with a lot more pushing and that. I guess VFL will be a combination between those two…

Q: Did you find playing midfield amongst grown men to be a big change?

VF: I found it really good because I was the younger kid that was quicker than the older blokes, so I was able to slip through tackles and outrun them a fair bit. But when it came to the contest they were just able to push me away.

Q: Have you spent much time in the gym?

VF: Yeah I’ve spent a fair bit of time doing a bit of bit of leg works to build up my torso and stuff like that. Hopefully this year I’ll be able to stand my ground a bit better.

Q: You played primarily as a small forward at TAC level. Is that your favourite spot or are you a midfielder at heart?

VF: I don’t mind having a crack at goal every now and then, but I do like the space of the midfield. I have regular rotations through the mdifield and the forward line.

Q: What were your best and worst memories about being involved with the Pioneers?

VF: Worst was when I was absolutely struggling to run around Epsom.

The best memories are from playing on some of the best grounds Victoria has to offer at the moment, in the highest competition at the time.

Q: You’ve played with some footballers who’ve taken the next step to the AFL…

VF: Yeah, I was lucky enough to play with Sam Kerridge as a bottom-ager, and then in 2012 with Ollie Wines and Jake Stringer, and it was great to make good friends with them.

Q: What was it like as a 16 year old to play in the TAC?

VF: I think the system is pretty good coming up from 15’s, 16’s and then the 18’s. It’s pretty daunting at first coming up from the 16’s when you’re running around all these bigger bodied 18’s, but the leadership’s pretty good out there, they welcome the 16’s very well.

Q: Do you have a regret you wish you could go back and do over?

VF: I probably wish I’d spent a bit more time in the gym so I was a bit more bulky in the field, but I was pretty happy with my entire time at the Pioneer’s.

Q: Do you have any advice you’d give to the current Pioneers?

VF: Take it as it comes. Your time as a Pioneer doesn’t really last that long so give it the best crack you can.

Another great thing about the Pioneers is that I’ve got mates all over Victoria from playing the TAC Cup, partly because Bendigo is such a big region. I caught up with mates from Gippsland when I was in Melbourne for Uni, so you make mates for life.

Q: Thanks for your time Vinnie. We hope you’re able to realise your dream and become a Premeirship player in 2014, and look forward to seeing you represent the Bendigo Gold in the VFL in the coming years.