

WE ALL LIVE IN A ROBBIE FOWLER HOUSE

By Steve Redhead



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Strains of a witty football song 'We all live in a Robbie Fowler, a Robbie Fowler House, a Robbie Fowler House' (to the tune of The Beatles' 'Yellow Submarine') drift across the windswept MCFC ground. It's a familiar refrain. An old chant. Well known in football circles.



Manchester City fans, some of whom probably DID live in a Robbie Fowler house, used to sing it when Fowler played (occasionally) for them earlier in the century. Before they were a part of the richest football outfit on the planet thanks to the Abu Dhabi United Group takeover in 2008. And before the good ship Robbie Fowler finally ran aground. The chant refers to Fowler's prodigious talent for buying up property in the North West of England with his gotten gains from a lengthy professional football

career which carried him through the early Premiership years at Liverpool (and England) to expensively overweight and injured days at Leeds United, Manchester City, Liverpool (again), Cardiff City and (on a pay-as-you-play basis) Blackburn Rovers.



The chant, though, wasn't heard at Manchester City FC or other English (or Welsh) league ground. It was at Mandurah City Football Club, an amateur team an hour's drive south of Perth in Western Australia (MCFC, geddit!?).

Fowler was turning out in July 2009 in a pre-season friendly in front of less than 3,000 people, playing for his new A-league club North Queensland Fury. North Queensland Fury are based in

Townsville in Queensland and have only recently joined the 4 year old competition.



The opposition were Perth Glory (bursting with ageing ex-English league players – Andy Todd, 34, for example; Dave Mitchell, former journeyman league player is the coach) and a few ex-pat scallies behind one of the goals decided to liven up the proceedings with a rendition of Robbie’s old song.

Fowler’s two glaring near misses in a second half outing (his team lost 1-0) were treated to derisory hoots from The Shed (Glory’s hardcore support), but in truth he was welcomed by most of the crowd.



For a while Glory played at the famous Western Australian Cricket Ground (WACA) cricket ground (24,000 capacity), and then occupied a smaller, rectangular ground variously known as Perth Oval, Members Equity and now ME Bank stadium. Perth Glory, a team often coached by British ex-pros (like Ipswich Town's Mitch d'Avray and Liverpool and Manchester City's Steve McMahon) have had regular crowds at their own ground of up to 15,000 over the last few years so they are used to turning up in numbers for professional football games.



ME Bank stadium will soon also host the state's Super Fourteen Rugby Union side, the Western Force, as well as Perth Glory, the one professional football team in Western Australia.



At Subiaco, Perth's Aussie Rules and Rugby Union ground, attendances reached 38,000 for Glory matches, especially in the Grand Final. Perth citizens are staunch football fans.



Robbie Fowler was the reason most of the 2,700 odd had turned up in the wet, windy conditions near the Indian Ocean at the tiny Hyundai stadium, paying 20 Aussie dollars for admission (10 for kids). The *Mandurah Mail* reported that 'Robbie Fowler was swamped with well wishers and autograph hunters after the match and patiently signed for all those who approached. A courteous and worthy champion'. Before the game the same local paper confirmed that 'Robbie is currently fit and will play at least 45 minutes'. Well, he played 45 minutes, but I don't know about the 'fit' bit. Fowler used to be an urchin, a teenage waif, at Anfield in

the 1990s. He scored great goals for fun. 'Jumpers for goalposts' football. He was one of the Liverpool Spice Boys, with Steve McManaman, Jamie Redknapp and company. By the time he got to Elland Road in the 2000s his bolt was shot. Hip, groin and other debilitating injuries caught up with him, and every 90 minutes looked likely to be his last. Still does. Despite the goodwill of fans at various clubs, including in Australia, the game is finally up. Playing from memory. Thanks for them, Robbie. All together now, 'We all live in a...'

Acknowledgement

All photos by Tara Brabazon, Professor of Media, University of Brighton.

Further Reading

Robbie Fowler (2005) *Fowler – My Autobiography*. London: Macmillan.