

# Aussie Rowles loving life in Edinburgh

We may all have been shivering lately in the snow and freezing temperatures, but one high-profile Aussie sporting import claims to be loving the experience. He did admit, however, that this feeling could wear off in time.

Step forward Kye Rowles who has just signed a five-year deal with Hearts, securing his long-term future to the club and allowing ambitious manager Robbie Neilson to build the team around the 24-year-old.

Neilson is delighted to have secured Rowles' signature and the classy defender is pleased to have put pen to paper after only being at the club since the summer.

Normally, he would have been basking in temperatures around 30C and spending time on the beach, but his full concentration now is on consolidating third place for the Jambos in the cinch Scottish Premiership.

Rowles (pictured in training by *Nigel Duncan*) was asked at a press briefing at The Oriam (which translates loosely from Scots Gaelic to: 'I am gold') what it was like to have signed a five-year deal with Hearts and said: "It feels special and I'm over the moon that it has happened so quickly into my stint here. I'm excited for my future here and I just can't wait to keep going."

“I would like to keep improving and I have developed so much already in the short time I have been here. I imagine that is only going to keep going in an upward trajectory and I can't wait to see what the future will bring.”

Knowles acknowledged the assistance he has received from experienced team-mates Craig Halkett and Stephen Kingsley following his switch from the Australian A-League, where there is no relegation, to the rigours of top flight Scottish football.

He said: “They (Halkett and Kingsley) are experienced defenders and they have shown me the ropes. I am trying to learn as much as possible from them every day and to be around that quality is special.”

Rowles only arrived at Tynecastle in the summer and he said that it was pleasing that the club had the belief in him to come forward with a long-term contract. He added: “It has been such a short time for both parties and it is really positive. For both parties to make that commitment is pretty special.”

The player said his main focus is here, especially after coming back from the World Cup, and he added: “I am trying to play the best football I can and give everything to the team and everything to the club.”

Playing in Scotland has been a step-up from “back-home”, he admitted but said that the league here is a really good one and is competitive every week when you are fighting for points in every game.

That, he said, was underlined when a number of Australian-born players, now developing their game in Scotland, who were picked for the World Cup squad in Qatar.

The player, who has become a firm favourite with fans in such a short time following a string of solid performances, said he

consulted Aussie-born countrymen Cammy Devlin and Nathaniel Atkinson before jetting half way around the world from Down Under.

They were full of praise for the organisation at Tynecastle and he said: "It was pretty much a no-brainer to come here and there is the chance of European football as well. The opportunities are endless here."

Knowles said playing in the two play-off games in the Europa Conference League was special and he confirmed that he loves living in Edinburgh. He said: "The weather has been different from back home but, apart from that, when I first got over here it was the middle of July and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival was on and that was pretty special.

"My partner was here as well and we got to enjoy a few comedy shows and magicians and things like that and to have a white Christmas, it did not snow on Christmas Day, but we got a bit of snow on Boxing Day. It was something I have never experienced before. The small things. zero degrees, back home it is 30c and down to the beach.

"To experience these things is really special and I am not sure if it will wear off, but I am loving the city so far."