

# Robert Earnshaw taking advantage of opportunity with Carl Robinson's Whitecaps

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By Israel Fehr

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VANCOUVER – Carl Robinson has seen Robert Earnshaw at his absolute best. The Vancouver Whitecaps head coach was a midfielder in the Wales side back in 2004 when a 22-year-old Earnshaw [scored a hat trick](#) against Scotland in an international friendly.

"I've known Earnie for a number of years. I played with Wales a number of times with Earnie and we played together at Norwich for 18 months," said Robinson. "I know what he's good at, I know what he needs a kick at the backside with, but he's a consummate professional and he gets the job done."

Now less than a week away from turning 34, Earnshaw hopes that a reunion with Robinson in Vancouver is just what he needs to put to an end the nomadic life he's been leading in professional soccer over the last decade. Since leaving his boyhood club, Cardiff City, in 2004, Earnshaw has played for ten clubs, including a two-year return to Cardiff eight years after his initial exit.

His most recent stop was with the Chicago Fire, where made a few appearances late last year, but he found himself without a contract at season's end. He returned home to Wales for a few months, waiting to see where he would wind up next.

That's when he heard from Robinson, who offered his former teammate the opportunity to return to MLS and join the Whitecaps on a preseason trial starting in early February. It was apparent from the onset that Earnshaw would be a good fit in Vancouver, but he didn't officially sign until late March.

"The negotiations went on a bit long but Robbo was very good with his communication, we talked a lot, we sat down a few times," said Earnshaw. "It was all about me getting fit, getting ready, getting to know the team. It feels like I've worked for this."

It didn't take long for Earnshaw to make an impact, coming on as a late-game substitute and scoring a dramatic stoppage-time winner in Vancouver's [2-1 win](#) Saturday against their Cascadia rival Portland Timbers. To score a big goal like that on his debut with a new club brought out Earnshaw's passion for the game.

"The length of time I've been playing football and that feeling when the ball hits the net, oh my God, it's the best," he said after the game. "I was so emotional. I was so happy. I kind of lost myself a little bit ."

The least surprised person in the stadium to see what unfolded on the field at BC Place was his new boss.

"I knew he'd get one chance," said Robinson. "The coolness of the finish and the calmness in his head was outstanding. I brought him here because he can score goals."

Earnshaw's [trademark somersault celebration](#) wasn't quite as sharp as usual, but give him a little time. A few more games and a few more goals and he'll be right back in peak front-flipping form. It helps that being a threat up front is just part of what the Welshman brings to the team. Most of all, he'll be counted on to provide leadership on a relatively young Whitecaps squad.

Given the amount of respect he already commands in the locker room and his soccer smarts, it only makes sense that Earnshaw wants to get into coaching when his playing days are done. According to [Marc Weber of The Province](#), Robinson is keen to help his former teammate earn the required hours and qualifications for the gig.

Sounds like a sweet deal for both sides. Earnshaw gives Robinson goals and a veteran presence while getting a step-up on his future plans in return. Of course, before he gets too serious about looking for a coaching job, Earnshaw is out to prove he has more somersaults left in him, and Robinson is more than happy to give him the opportunity to prove it.

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