

## **A LUKE HILL/NICK KEEGAN HYBRID ?**

During 2021 we'll be looking at some of OFC's greatest ever footballers.

Milic, Tregonning, Linden, Hodgkiss, Scott (x2), Bye and Hottes are just some of the names we'll be checking.

But we thought we'd lead off the series with Robbie Cooke who, in terms of raw ability is an absolute stand out.

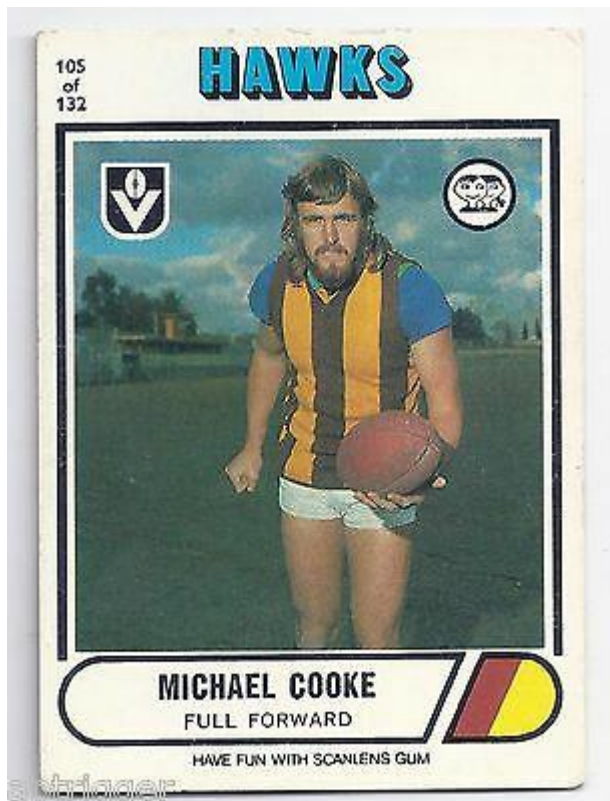
What was Robbie Cooke like ?

Well imagine a player of Luke Hill's height and with a similar leap and then add the speed and ball skills of Nick Keegan into the mix.

Robbie was equally at home sitting on the shoulders of an opponent or taking two or three bounces in a scorching run along the wing.

Robbie's brother Michael shifted to Sassafras in the late 1970s. Famously Michael was the first Hawk to make his playing debut in a final when he kicked four goals against North in the 1975 second semi.

He was then held kickless in the Grand Final and never played for the Hawks again ( he injured his back- and also had Hudson and Moncrieff ahead of him).



Michael was persuaded to play for the locals and donned the red and white guernsey in 1980.

He also told the Club that his brother was a better footballer than him and we should ask him to play !!  
Imagine our enthusiasm at hearing that news !

Robbie had played alongside Michael in the Hawthorn reserves (CHF) and for a number of reasons walked away from a VFL career.

One Hawk fan from the era recalls Robbie completely dominating Carlton in a Reserves game and remembers the immense sense of excitement about his prospects as a senior player.

He draws comparisons between Robbie and Nick Reiwoldt while former player and legendary coach David Parkin likens Cooke to Wayne Carey.

So...having left Hawthorn in his prime how did he go at Olinda-Ferny Creek ?

Well word soon spread about his freakish talents.

When he lined up for a goal on the bottom flank at Olinda, somewhere between wing and half forward, the opposition laughed. However even they were in awe when he made the virtually impossible shot.

Bottom line- he regularly made the "impossible" look doable.

One match when he took so many screamers against Mooroolbark the crowd called for him to be banned from the local league ( we were playing Second Division EDFL)



***Rob Cooke- back row.***

Off field Robbie was an easy going self-effacing bloke who fitted in perfectly at Olinda. He was the sort of guy who would perform miracles on the field on a Saturday and turn up for a working bee

the following morning.

Robbie only played a few seasons before drifting off- he helped us into the Div 2 finals but we couldn't jag a flag.

There's no doubt he was targeted by opposition teams who used physical intimidation that wouldn't be tolerated today

Was he the best player to ever wear our jumper ? Well that depends on how you define "greatest" doesn't it ?

But he was probably the most spectacular and those who saw him play at OFC, and Hawthorn Reserves, still talk about a very special player.

Robbie still lives in the area, at The Patch and is a wonderful self-effacing bloke.