

# Fowler III goes from 100th Rose Bowl to 50th Super Bowl

By Mike Klis

9 News

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Always it's the star players who get asked if they're excited about playing in the Super Bowl.

The backup players get a kick out of it, too.

"First year playing and going to the Super Bowl?" said Broncos No. 4 receiver Bennie Fowler. "It's great. And it's Super Bowl 50, too. I played in the 100th Rose Bowl and now I'm playing in the 50th Super Bowl, too."

It seems that besides his knack for turning his occasional catch into big plays, Fowler is also a pretty fair numerologist.

Playing for Michigan State in the 2013-season Rose Bowl (Jan. 1, 2014) Fowler caught two passes for 97 yards from quarterback Connor Cook in the Spartans' 24-20 win against Stanford.

They call the Rose Bowl the "Granddaddy of Them All," because it's the oldest bowl game. And now Fowler will help the NFL celebrate the Super Bowl's golden anniversary.

Signed by the Broncos last year as an undrafted free agent, Fowler spent his entire rookie season of 2014 on the practice field. He won a spot on the 53-man roster with his fine play in the preseason.

In the regular season and two playoff games, Fowler has 18 catches for 238 yards for a 13.2 yard average that is third only to Emmanuel Sanders' 14.8-yard per catch and Virgil Green's 13.3.

Fowler said his mom, Teresa Gueyser; dad, Bennie Fowler Jr.; stepmom, two sisters and two friends from Michigan State would accompany him in Santa Clara, Calif., for the Broncos' Super Bowl trip.

Fowler said he tried to add the "III" to his last name about halfway through this season but was told he needed to make such a change well before the season started. Next season, he said the back of his jersey will read: "Fowler III."

# Bennie Fowler makes most of chances to carve out role

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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The distance Denver Broncos wide receiver Bennie Fowler has come in the last year can be measured by his jersey's tour of Oakland.

In the moments that followed the Broncos' 16-10 victory over the Oakland Raiders, Fowler wasn't wearing his No. 16. At that time an NBA champion -- Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green -- had Fowler's jersey in hand, with big plans on his mind.

"That's my boy," Green said as he waited for an elevator at field level in O.co Coliseum. "I'll be putting this up ... I'll get it in a frame."

Longtime friends Fowler and Green both went to Michigan State and are Michigan natives, and Fowler was happy to hand over the game-worn jersey with the grass stain on the left shoulder.

"Happy about it, because I did wear it in a game," Fowler said. "I think the coaches trust me, Peyton [Manning] trusts me and I've had some opportunities."

Fowler and Jordan Norwood have clawed their way up the depth chart and on to the field in the offense as the third wide receivers. Manning has thrown the ball to each of them in key situations and each has moved past Cody Latimer on the depth chart.

Latimer, a second-round pick in the 2014 draft who has been working through a groin injury in recent weeks, has not been able to turn plenty of practice heroics into game-day success.

And while Norwood has largely played in the slot, Fowler is a big-bodied receiver, at 212 pounds, whom the Broncos have played on the outside and in the slot as well. Fowler leads the team in yards per catch -- 15.3 -- and of his seven receptions this season, six have gone for first downs.

With a 41-yard catch Sunday against the Raiders, Fowler also has the fourth-longest pass play of the season for the Broncos.

"Every time that he goes out there, he makes a first down, so that helps out," Broncos offensive coordinator Rick Dennison said. "If we make a first down, it's him and Jordan right now. We're throwing to those two guys. ... Bennie just goes out, he's a big man, he can run and catches the ball."

Fowler spent the 2014 rookie season on the Broncos' practice squad after signing with the team as an undrafted free agent. Fowler likely would have been drafted had he been able to play in all four of his seasons at Michigan State, but he had suffered foot fractures in 2009 and 2011.

He had played both his junior and senior seasons for the Spartans, but many teams still considered him a medical risk.

"I still thought I could make an opportunity," Fowler said. "I played my last two years, I was healthy those two years, so I didn't really worry about it. If it would have happened my senior year, then maybe I would have been worried the NFL might not happen."

Fowler also didn't take his season on the practice squad as a slight; he made it into a learning experience.

"Why wouldn't you?" Fowler said. "You're playing with Peyton throwing the ball, and learning from [Demaryius Thomas] and Emmanuel [Sanders]. I looked at it like a redshirt year, you have those in college and I had mine in the NFL."

Fowler's transition into the league has also been smoothed by the fact Michigan State, unlike most college programs, plays plenty of press coverage -- the Spartans' defensive backs are physical with receivers at the line of scrimmage. Many young receivers have a difficult time initially in the NFL because they suddenly have to battle just to get into their routes, something they didn't have to do often in college.

There was also the matter that Fowler often faced Spartans cornerback Darqueze Dennard -- the first-round pick of the Cincinnati Bengals in the '14 draft -- in practice each day.

"I knew, when you face Darqueze Dennard every day and he's going in the first round, that tells you that you can play in the league," Fowler said. "I was comfortable getting off press coverage too and a lot of guys struggle with that when they first come out. I just want to keep getting in the right spots, have Peyton keep trusting me and have the coaches keep trusting me to do the right thing."

# As Fowler grows, close friend and NBA champion Draymond Green hopes to see similar path

By Ben Swanson  
DenverBroncos.com  
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When wide receiver Bennie Fowler had his breakthrough four-catch, 40-yard game against the Lions in Week 3, he said he had no butterflies in his stomach. With about two dozen of his closest friends and family in tow, he was at ease in his hometown.

Two weeks later, with Draymond Green—whom Fowler considers family—in attendance, he looked comfortable again, making two catches for 46 yards, including a slippery 41-yard gain.

Literally and metaphorically, the two are a long way from when they sparked a friendship back in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., as AAU teammates. After years facing one another on the hardwood in high school, Green enrolled at Michigan State and Fowler did the same a year later, though he had transitioned his focus from basketball to football. After college, Green headed to the professional ranks when the Golden State Warriors drafted him in 2012 while Fowler headed to Denver as an undrafted college free agent in 2013.

Fowler had gone to support Green during his first season when the Warriors came to Detroit, and now Green was able to do the same.

"I've come out here to plenty of his games and for him to come out here and take my jersey, it was just a surreal moment," Fowler said.

It's been in the works for a while for Green to come to one of Fowler's games, but because the NFL season tends to overlap with the NBA's training-camp schedules and the first few months of regular-season play, they had to wait until the Broncos came to Green's doorstep in Oakland.

But the wait was well worth it. Fowler had put in the offseason work to get to the point where he's a trusted weapon in the offense, and with his elusive catch-and-run, he showed a little bit of the athleticism that Green recognized from their days on the hardwood together.

"Bennie was real athletic," Green said. "He kind of picked up football late but when he picked it up, he took right off. So to see him out here, for me, is like a dream come true.

"He's one of my best friends and out here living his dream is amazing. He got a couple plays today, great catch-and-run and he dived on them at the end. I liked that."

Green got a championship ring with the Warriors in June as he helped them become one of the best NBA teams in recent history, and now he wants to see one of his closest friends get his own.

"Definitely want to see him get a ring," Green said. "And the way those guys are playing right now, they've got a possibility, especially when they've got number 18 [Peyton Manning] in the backfield. There's always a possibility."

Earning a bigger role on offense, Fowler has reaped just the beginning of the rewards of the work he put in through the offseason and the previous year on the practice squad.

"Playing on a team like this with the receiving corps that we have and then also playing with Peyton, it's a dream come true, catching multiple passes from him in a game, him trusting me like that," Fowler said after the Broncos defeated the Lions.

"It's been a fair road. Undrafted, I was on the practice squad last year, learned a lot from great receivers and that carried over to the preseason and now it's carrying over to the regular season."

# Through my eyes: Bennie Fowler returns home to the Motor City

By Bennie Fowler  
DenverBroncos.com  
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Stepping onto Ford Field last Sunday night felt familiar.

The first time I ever played at Ford Field was in 2007 when I was a junior in high school and then as a senior, both for the Michigan High School State Championship title.

But growing up in Bloomfield, Michigan, just outside of Detroit, I didn't dream of playing at Ford Field.

My sights were set on being a basketball player.

I didn't start playing football consistently until my junior year of high school. For a couple years I played in a youth league and my first two years of high school I didn't play.

But my mom noticed that after years of running track, winning the state championship and competing in long jump – that I had the speed and potential to be great. She told me I should go back out, try football and see how and see how it worked out.

It worked out and I got the opportunity to play for the Michigan State Spartans for four years and go back to Ford Field as a redshirt freshman – and catch my first ever pass in college football.

I never imagined I would ever play in the NFL, so walking onto that field in my Broncos uniform in front of my family was like no feeling I'd ever experienced before. Especially after spending last season on the practice squad.

During game preparations for the Lions, I didn't expect to play as much as I did. Wide Receivers Coach Tyke Tolbert told us we were all going to play. He told me I would be in some third-and-long situations to use my speed. But once I got in a rhythm I guess they kept me in there more and I continued to get the ball.

And then it happened.

In the second quarter, during the fourth series of the night on second-and-7, Peyton Manning found me and I was able to gain 13 yards --- my first catch in the NFL on the same field I got my first catch in colleg

After that there was a timeout and it all sunk in. Demaryius Thomas came up to me and said, Oh, okay, I see you! It's good to see you out here!

That meant a lot because the past season I spent on the practice squad I had the opportunity to learn from Demaryius and Emmanuel Sanders on a day-to-day basis. Things like that helped a lot. It's helped me carry it over to the preseason and now the regular season.

I've been working for this and I'm happy that my first catch was at home. Hard work is paying off. I've got to continue to stay consistent, so I'm going to continue to work hard and when my number's called I'll be ready to make some plays.

# Broncos wide receiver Bennie Fowler is moving on up

By Rod Mackey

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He was one of those Denver Broncos on the bubble. But for wide receiver Bennie Fowler, the bubble never burst.

Fowler made the final 53-man roster and has been moving on up ever since. The former Michigan State star was busy on Sunday in Detroit against the Lions as he continued to work his way up the depth chart, catching two passes from quarterback Peyton Manning.

"It was very big, I played there before," Fowler said. "A couple times in high school and in college, so it mean a lot to me."

What also meant a lot to Fowler was that Manning was singing his praises.

"I was really happy for Bennie," Manning said. "I can't speak for him, but I know that he had to be pumped playing in his hometown and being a Michigan State alum. I'm sure that he had a lot of tickets with people in the stands. It speaks to him. Obviously, he put a big impression on the coaches with training camp and limited reps for them to put him in there. Throwing to him five times tells you the confidence that I have in him. It wasn't like we were throwing away from him. We were throwing to him. What's unique about Bennie is that he can catch the deep ball on the outside, he's got the speed to run it, but he's fearless across the middle. That's a pretty good combination, so I think you'll continue to see him to be involved in this offense."

Fellow wide receiver Demaryius Thomas also liked what he saw Sunday from Fowler.

"He did great," Thomas said. "He came in and made some key first down catches. That's what we need, guys to step up when they're called and he's one of the guys that stepped up."

"I want more," Fowler mentioned. "Being out there was so much fun."

Fowler's next chance to be out there is Sunday afternoon against the 2-1 Minnesota Vikings.

# Bennie Fowler again introduced at Ford Field

By Mike Klis

9 News

September 28, 2015

Ford Field knows Bennie Fowler.

The NFL had no clue who Fowler was until Sunday night. But Ford Field is a place where Fowler historically has introduced himself.

"I got my first catch in college here," Fowler said Sunday night following the Broncos' 24-12 win against the Detroit Lions. "Now I got my first NFL catch here. Played two (high school) state championships here."

He helped Detroit Country Day win the state basketball championship his sophomore year (spring semester) of 2007 and state football championship his senior year (fall semester) in 2008.

He spent five years in the Michigan State Spartans' football program, making his first catch, for 8 yards, as a redshirt freshman in 2010 against Florida Atlantic and not really getting to play much receiver until his junior year.

Undrafted last year, Fowler signed with the Broncos as a college free agent, spent the entire 2014 season on their practice squad then emerged in August in a preseason game at Houston.

His first NFL catch came with 8:35 remaining in the second quarter Sunday, a 13-yard grab on a pass thrown by Peyton Manning. Fowler finished with four catches for 50 yards.

He knew from last week's game plan he might get a chance.

"I knew I would play a little bit," Fowler said. "I didn't know I was going to get the ball that much but I'm not mad about that."

Fowler has moved ahead of Cody Latimer, the Broncos' second-round draft pick last year, as the No. 5 receiver.

# Bennie Fowler rockets way to Denver Broncos roster spot

By Nicki Jhabvala  
Denver Post  
September 27, 2015

Bennie Fowler wasn't supposed to be here. He wasn't supposed to be playing on a 53-man roster, and he wasn't supposed to be one of Peyton Manning's targets.

When the Broncos' training camp opened, Fowler was just another receiver on the team's long list of candidates. The second-year player, who signed with Denver as a college free agent in 2014, was still a longshot to make the final roster.

But when Emmanuel Sanders was sidelined with a hamstring injury in training camp, Fowler took advantage of the extra reps. Often, Fowler would stay afterward to learn some of Sanders' tricks. Then, over-the-shoulder grabs in the far corner of the end zone became a usual camp occurrence. And then the Houston preseason game happened, when he laid out for a highlight-reel, diving, 40-yard catch off a Trevor Siemian pass.

Bennie Fowler had arrived. Soon after, he arrived on the Broncos' 53-man roster.

His encore performance came Sunday, when the Bloomfield, Mich., native and former Michigan State Spartan recorded four catches for 50 yards in the Broncos' 24-12 victory over the Lions.

"I had my first college catch here, and now I got my first NFL catch here," he said.

Fowler's pair of 13-yard catches in the second quarter helped set up a 1-yard touchdown run by Ronnie Hillman that put the Broncos (3-0) on the board first and give them their first rushing touchdown of the season.

Fowler followed with an 11-yard catch on the Broncos' next drive, which ended with a touchdown to Demaryius Thomas.

And then he caught another 13-yarder in the fourth to open a five-play drive that would end with a 48-yard field goal by Brandon McManus.

After two games in which Peyton Manning and the Broncos' offense struggled to blend the styles of their veteran quarterback and new coach, Gary Kubiak, Denver went back to what it does best while in Detroit. Manning played in shotgun for most of the game after many failed attempts under center in Weeks 1 and 2.

"It means a lot, playing on a team like this, with the receiving corps we have, and then also playing with Peyton," Fowler said. "It's a dream come true."

Kubiak on Friday said he remained committed to running the ball more, but the Broncos' rushing options became limited in the first half at Detroit (0-3) when C.J. Anderson left briefly after a helmet-to-helmet hit in the first quarter and Juwan Thompson went down with a neck injury in the second and was later ruled out.

But as the run game failed to produce, Manning continued to spray passes to his receivers, completing 31 of 42 attempts for 324 yards and two touchdowns.

Thomas led all with nine catches for 92 yards and a touchdown.

Sanders followed with six catches for 87 yards.

But it was Fowler, a name few knew just two months ago, who helped Manning find his rhythm and the Broncos find the end zone.

Fowler spent all of 2014 on the Broncos practice squad, impressing in spurts but ultimately failing to win a spot on the active roster.

Sunday, in front a crowd that knew his name and knew it well, he showed that, yes, he really is supposed to be here, on a 53-man roster, fielding passes from Peyton Manning.

# Bennie Fowler, Shaquil Barrett show what a difference a year makes

By Jeff Legwold  
ESPN.com  
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Whenever a team changes its coaching staff, there is always at least some football trepidation from some of the players left behind, especially those who believed they were on a good developmental track with the former staff, that they were close.

There's some nervousness about what the new staff will think and whether the new coaches will have other people in mind for jobs. But two Denver Broncos who spent the 2014 season on the team's practice squad appear poised to take the next jump with Gary Kubiak's staff in place.

Wide receiver Bennie Fowler and outside linebacker Shaquil Barrett are poised to join the team's 53-man roster when the Broncos trim the roster by Saturday, 4 p.m. ET. Both players were among those Broncos coach Gary Kubiak said caught his eye -- again -- during the team's preseason finale Thursday night.

"No. 48 [Barrett] continues to stand out to me; he's had a great preseason," Kubiak said. "... Bennie Fowler stood up, made some tough plays in the game."

Barrett spent all but one week of the regular season on the Broncos' practice squad in '14 -- he was a game-day inactive Oct. 19 against the San Francisco 49ers -- and was on the roster for the Broncos' playoff loss to the Indianapolis Colts, but did not play in the game. Fowler spent all of the 2014 season on the team's practice squad.

This preseason, Fowler led the team in both receptions (10) and receiving yards (155) and had a touchdown as well. He showed an in-game connection with both Brock Osweiler and Trevor Siemian at quarterback.

"I've worked with [Fowler] a lot in practice and when I've been in during games," Siemian said. "If you put it where he can get it, he'll get it."

The Broncos like Fowler's size (6-foot-1, 212 pounds) and they see him as an option at both the outside position and in the slot in the offense.

Barrett initially caught the coaching staff's attention with his conditioning when he showed up to the offseason program. Even then Kubiak and the defensive coaches said he looked primed to push his way on to the roster as Barrett said he had changed his diet and stepped up his offseason work.

In the four preseason games, Barrett has consistently made life difficult for opposing offensive linemen. Despite two offside penalties in Thursday night's game, Barrett led the team in sacks in the preseason with four as the team finished with a league-leading 20 in the warm-up games, six more than the next team.

Barrett is likely the fourth outside linebacker as the cut-down deadline approaches, behind Von Miller, DeMarcus Ware and rookie Shane Ray.

"I feel good about the situation, but I've still got the butterflies and still worried also because you never know what's going to happen," Barrett said. "They might go in a different direction. I just don't know so I'm just staying by my phone in case I get a call, but hopefully I don't have to get it."

# After quality preseason outing, Broncos' Bennie Fowler keeps his momentum

By Jeff Legwold

ESPN.com

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As Demaryius Thomas, Cody Latimer and some of the Denver Broncos' other receivers watched Bennie Fowler reel in a long catch-and-run for a touchdown during Monday's practice, Latimer shouted "I see you Bennie" as Fowler blazed by just after the ball had landed on Fowler's fingertips.

Latimer's not alone, because it seems a lot of people are noticing what Fowler has done as the Broncos have progressed through training camp. He led the team in receiving in Friday night's preseason opener with 67 yards worth of catches, including a 41-yard reception on a throw from rookie Trevor Siemian.

"I think that you guys see it just like me," Gary Kubiak said after Monday's practice. "He's had a good camp. The strength of his camp has probably been the last two weeks. In the game, he played really well. He played well on special teams and you saw him practice today. It's interesting, young players see the light and say, 'I can do this. I can contribute.' It's fun to watch that light go on."

There is room on the Broncos' depth chart for two, or perhaps three, receivers to make cut beyond Thomas, Emmanuel Sanders and Latimer. Fowler, at 212 pounds, has shown he can work on the outside as well as in the slot and has blocked well in the run game.

Monday was also the kind of practice that gets a player in Fowler's position noticed even more. He followed a quality performance in a game with another quality performance in the next practice. So while what he had done against the Seahawks was fresh in the coaches' minds, Fowler went out and got their attention again Monday morning.

With Sanders held out of Monday's work with a sore hamstring, the Broncos also offered a glimpse of where things stand on the depth chart at wide receiver after the top three, as Fowler and Jordan Norwood got plenty of work.

For both Fowler and Norwood to make the cut to 53 they would have to dislodge veteran Andre Caldwell, who has been with the Broncos for the last three seasons. Having just turned 30, Caldwell has maintained his speed throughout his career, has been a reliable option at times, and can serve as a kickoff returner if needed.

For now Fowler said he's just trying to keep himself in the conversation.

"I've been building chemistry with all the quarterbacks, just getting the reps in practice and then moving on to the game," he said. "I just felt comfortable out there. I was just really more comfortable out there."

# From Denver to the Bay: Bennie Fowler's friendship with Draymond Green

By Ben Swanson  
DenverBroncos.com  
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Bennie Fowler didn't plan on playing football. His first love was basketball, but one of his close friends from AAU basketball—Jonas Gray, now a running back for the Patriots—convinced him to try his hand at a new sport.

Fowler proved to be a quick study, compiling about 1,500 all-purpose yards and 15 touchdowns in his senior season as Detroit Country Day marched to the state championship game.

But he'll always be connected to his basketball roots, which have extended from Michigan and now stretch across the country with his friendships to teammates continuing to this day.

Via group chat, Fowler stays connected with a handful of friends on a daily basis. Those friends include a number of notable basketball standouts: Utah Jazz guard Trey Burke, Boston Celtics forward Jared Sullinger, Gray and Jordan Dumars, son of NBA legend Joe Dumars. And it includes one close friend who now has an NBA championship to his name — Draymond Green.

Fowler and Green have maintained a friendship for nearly a decade now after meeting through AAU basketball in high school. They were on the same team, though in separated groups with Green a year up from Fowler. Green would head to Michigan State for college, and a year later Fowler joined him but to play football. The two would live in the same apartment building on the same floor.

Fowler also had the experience of playing against Green and his team in high school. Fowler's Detroit Country Day team would be the second-best team in the state but Green was hard to stop. "Because he could dribble the ball, he's so versatile," Fowler said. "He was almost playing point guard in high school. They beat us by 20 when we played and we were the second-best team in the state."

Green worked his way up the Spartans' depth chart and hit his stride during his senior season. Michigan State would win the Big Ten championship and go on to the Sweet Sixteen.

But when preparing for the draft, Green faced criticism that he wouldn't make it in the NBA because with his size. "In the college program, he used to say he was 6-8," Fowler said with a laugh. "Nah, he's about 6-6." With power forward strength but shooting guard or small forward height, Green's draft stock fell and the consensus first-team All-American found a new source of motivation, just like he had in college and in high school.

"When he's around us, he's a very laid-back guy, but he's always got a chip on his shoulder," Fowler says. "A lot of people was saying he wasn't going to play in the NBA or he wasn't going to be in the NBA and he still had criticism this year but he continues to prove people wrong. He did that at Michigan State as well coming from Saginaw. That's like a blue-collar town, that's what type of person he is, the type of heart he has. He's a hard worker."

You can see that in Green's post-victory celebration on the court, and now he'll move on to a new challenge whether again with the Warriors or with a new team. Green's contract is up and as a free agent he'll decide on a new one when free agency opens on July 1.

And whenever that gets done, Fowler said he and the rest of their group will be there to celebrate right there with him.