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Former UIC Star Jay DeMerit Leads Watford To English Premier League Promotion

DeMerit scores opening goal in Watford's 3-0 shutout of Leeds United in Coca-Cola Championship on Sunday.

May 22, 2006

London- Former UIC soccer player [Jay DeMerit](#) scored in the 25th minute to open the scoring and help Watford complete its magical journey into the English Premier League in a 3-0 Hornets victory over Leeds United in the 2006 Coca-Cola Championship final on Sunday.

In front of 64,736 rabid fans at Millenium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales, DeMerit was the man of the match as his crisp header from the far post went past Leeds keeper Neil Sullivan and put Watford ahead 1-0.

That's all the Hornets would need, as the center-half paced an unbreakable defense that helped goalkeeper Ben Foster record the clean sheet.

Sullivan was charged with an own goal in the 57th, and Darius Henderson capped the scoring by converting a penalty kick in the 84th minute to put the game out of reach.

The victory lifts Watford into the Barclays Premiership, the league considered by most to be the greatest professional soccer stage in the world.

It is no surprise that Watford's fairy tale trip to the Premiership was led by DeMerit, who completed his UIC career in the fall of 2001 as a two-time NSCAA All-Midwest First Team defender. The Green Bay, Wis., native quickly made a name for himself as a gritty defender when he was picked up by Watford in late 2004 and has been a fan favorite ever since.

Despite numerous individual accolades and two NCAA Tournament appearances, including a Sweet 16 run in 2000, during his UIC career, DeMerit received few opportunities to play professionally in the States. That prompted him to move to England, where former Watford coach Ray Lewington gave DeMerit the chance to play that the young back was looking

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Just four seasons removed from playing for UIC, Jay DeMerit will now patrol Watford's backline in the English Premier League.

for in 2004.

Watford, with new coach Aidy Boothroyd, was not expected to advance deep into the Coca-Cola Championship post-season by most experts. But thanks to a rigorous attack on both sides of the pitch paced by the energy of the 26-year-old DeMerit, the Hornets now find themselves in English soccer's top tier.

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