

# IS TROY DEENEY A WATFORD LEGEND?

BY JOE YOUNG



When you consider the legendary status of a player in relation to their team, it comes down to a variety of elements: determination, club records, heart and above all a genuine love for the club he is playing for. It is clear that Troy has all these attributes in abundance.

First of all, he's broken many a record and has developed his game so much since Malky Mackay invested in him all those years ago. Troy is symbolic of Watford in many ways, having built up from a modest background into being an established Premier League striker. Deeney has embodied the journey Watford have made over the last four years since the Pozzos took over. In 2011 he was a good Championship striker, now he has developed into an established Premier League player who has reached double figures this season.

He is the first player in the club's history to score 20 goals in three consecutive seasons. What's most admirable about this is not just the skill needed to achieve the feat, but also that he decided to stay at Watford after each of these seasons when it seemed as though he could have left for the Premier League during any transfer window. It's hard to build a club legend at a team like Watford because inevitably any good player will have been shipped out. Tommy Smith (who left twice!) is a clear example of this. But Troy stayed, and captained Watford to the promised land of the Premier League.

Living up to his name, Troy, which brings to mind the image of a Greek warrior, plays with muscle, tenacity and superior effort. The majority of his contributions this season have been bullying defenders and winning headers he has no right to win. The goal that sums this up the best is his towering header against Aston Villa back in November where he outjumped two defenders from an awkward angle to head powerfully into the corner. A goal made from sheer determination and force.

His attitude off the pitch is admirable; whenever he is interviewed he is refreshingly honest and does not mince words. After the dismal defeat and performance against Southampton in January, Deeney was quoted: "I am not going to try and gloss over the fact that we were crap. There is no point hiding the facts." Whilst arguably not as important as his on-field acts, his off the field persona identifies him as a likeable figure who is brutally honest.

This honesty manifests itself in a selfless attitude on the pitch. Much like how Emile Heskey was a player that Michael Owen loved to play with, Deeney makes anyone he is partnered with look better. Matěj Vydra and Odion

Ighalo are two examples of strikers who were never prolific before or after playing with Deeney. Vydra was electric for Watford for two seasons, but has disappointed at both West Brom and Reading. Before playing with Troy, Ighalo was an average goal scorer for Granada. Because of his surprising ability to spot a pass, and also his willingness to get stuck in and win flick-ons, Troy is the ideal partner to any striker; less of a target man and more of a complete forward. Sanchez Flores has even placed Troy in an unfamiliar attacking midfield position this season due to these traits. Troy does everything for the team, he is willing to play in awkward positions and pass the ball when necessary (unlike Ighalo), he is the ultimate team player.

He also has the accolade of scoring perhaps one of the greatest goals in our modern history (does it need to be named?). A goal that is unforgettable for the bedlam it caused at the ground, on social media, radio and live on Sky Sports. Once again a goal that is emblematic of the way Troy asserts himself on the pitch; a never say die attitude combined with sheer, brute force. As he put himself: "There was no way I was placing it - if the keeper had saved it he was ending up in the goal as well."

The way in which he interacts with the fans is also impressive, as exemplified here from his reaction to after the goal against Leicester from an interview in Tales From The Vicarage: "When I'm older I can look back on it. Even though we went on to lose to Crystal Palace in the final, the fans still have that day... That goal does prove that it's never done until it's done. That goal shows the magic and beauty of football. It's why we love it, for moments like that." Clearly, Troy understands why he and his teammates mean so much to the fans. At the end of any game, win or lose, you will never fail to see Troy clapping the fans, even when thousands have left.

The answer to the question: "Is Troy Deeney a Watford Legend?" rather answers itself. Troy has worked his way up from playing second fiddle to Danny Graham and Marvin Sordell in 2010 to being the spearhead of a Premier League team this season. He's faced adversity and is now the talisman, captain and icon of our team.

The only question that remains is: "Where does he rank in the all time greats?" I have unfortunately (arguably) only been a Watford fan for 10 years so am possibly not qualified enough to answer that question. But surely he must rank amongst the greats of Luther Blissett and co.?

Troy Deeney will undoubtedly live long in the memory banks for Watford fans of this era. He has scored goals, is immensely dedicated and most importantly, has a genuinely warming relationship with the fans. His goal celebration and reactions to conceding at Wembley showed that. Deeney is a Watford icon and legend, if ever there was one.

*Joe Young has been a committed patron of Vicarage Road since a 0-0 draw with Aston Villa in the last season in the Premiership, where Watford finished in a very unspectacular 20th position. He has not looked back since.*