

Family life sacrificed in title bid

BY FRANK SMITH

It's been almost six weeks since Mitchell Smith last saw his children and girlfriend but the Harrow Weald boxer is confident his sacrifice will pay off as he attempts to finish 2014 on the verge of a British title.

Smith has been widely tipped to secure major honours during his boxing career but a hand injury stalled the 21-year-old's progress slightly after he secured the Southern Area super featherweight title in September.

This Saturday sees Smith return to the ring after five months out but he had no intention of easing himself back into the swing of things, as he takes on unbeaten Welsh champion Mark Evans (9-1-0).

"I was asked if I wanted a warm-up fight but I'm not interested in fights that are meaningless," Smith said. "I want fights that mean something to the ratings."

"I don't want to run before I can walk but I want to start taking out bigger names."

"Mark is unbeaten and Welsh champion and I think he is set up perfectly for me and his style is perfect for mine so it should be a good fight. The fans are in for a treat."

He continued: "I only boxed 11 rounds last year so it was a frustrating time for me. I have had five months out now and haven't had any money coming in since October so I'm looking forward to getting back in the ring and performing in front of my crowd - I've sold around 400 tickets."

"I am hoping for a top performance. I want the press to start talking about me again as last year they were talking about me being a top prospect and



Mitchell Smith before his last fight five months ago. Picture: ACTION IMAGES

then things went quiet because I was very inactive. So I want to get back to winning ways and crack on and start taking out big names to get into the top ten."

"I want to be on the verge of a British title by the end of this year. I want to be in the top eight or ten of the rankings."

Smith, who is unbeaten in seven fights, three of which were knock-outs, had never suffered with injuries prior to last year but after two months out with a pulled abdominal muscle, he damaged his hand on his way to winning the Southern Area title on points against Scott Moises.

The former Bushey Boxing Club

fighter continued to train during his five months out and insists he has never punched so hard.

Smith stated he is "more dedicated than ever" after moving away from his family for the last six weeks, with one of his sponsors, Paul Winter, of Winterwell Build, providing the fighter with a five-bedroom bungalow in New Malden for the training camp.

Smith has shown enviable discipline as he has been away from his one-year-old daughter, girlfriend and her three children who he "treats like they are my own".

Smith said: "At the weekend it will be six weeks since I have seen my girlfriend and kids and it has been hard.

But it makes me a better fighter. It lets me concentrate on my ability. I have no hassles, such as the kids waking up, I can just go to bed, get the sleep I need and then get up to go training. I don't need to worry about anything."

"My girlfriend does a brilliant job at home and looking after the kids for me and the training camp helps me become a better fighter."

"It is very hard but it is something I have to do," he continued.

"Your kids have your heart and they make you a softer person so coming away from them means I turn a little nastier in camp and I'm in fight mode. In the boxing game, you have to want to hurt your opponent so it is good for me to be ready to snap."

Providing a better life for his girlfriend and four children is a source of huge motivation for the 'Baby faced assassin', whose fight with Evans is not for a belt and is at the nine stone eight weight.

He explained: "I had a tough enough upbringing. Me, my dad and my brother had nothing. We had times with no electric, no gas and no food. Times were hard but it made me a harder person and I don't want my kids to go through that. My motivation is to make their lives better and make sure they don't have to go through that."

Smith finished the interview by adding: "Can I thank my girlfriend and dad for selling my tickets. It is hard enough for a fighter selling tickets but they took it on so I could concentrate solely on my training camp and I want to thank them."

Smith is set for an emotional return on Saturday - both in the ring and out of it. But for very different reasons.

Stones' title challenge continues

Wealdstone continued their Ryman Premier title charge with two victories in the space of three days.

The Stones, who are currently third in the table, defeated AFC Hornchurch 2-0 thanks to goals from Scott McGleish and Tom Pett on Monday night.

McGleish opened the scoring in the 38th minute as he rifled the ball into the roof of the net.

The second goal didn't arrive until late in the contest. Pett was teed up by Glen Little and he curled his shot into the far corner to complete the victory.

On Saturday, the Stones defeated Thamesmead Town 2-0.

The opening goal arrived after just two minutes as Michael Malcolm volleyed home a cross.

Pett came close to doubling the lead before the interval but his shot was saved by Sam Mott.

In the second half, Luke Piggden's mazy run resulted in a penalty which Sean Cronin converted to seal victory.

Elsewhere, Harrow Borough produced their best display of the season to secure a 4-1 win against Maidenhead United.

Simeon Akinola netted the opener but Maidstone levelled as Frannie Collin headed in a cross at the back post.

Borough, who are 17th, retook the lead in the first half through debutant Harold Odamety and a second from Akinola.

Victor Osobu found the net late on to round off the win.

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