

'It is like we're telepathic'

Super-featherweight ace Mitchell Smith and trainer Jason Rowland say their relationship is so close that it's on a telepathic level.

The dynamic duo are preparing for their English title challenge at the Copper Box Arena on Saturday, April 12, with Smith, the current Southern Area Champion, facing unbeaten Peter Cope from Hartlepool.

Harrow Weald's Smith and Rowland, a former British and WBU World Light-Welterweight champion, have been working together tightly together since Smith turned professional in June 2012 and is unbeaten in eight fights.

West Ham fan Smith, who was announced to the crowd during last night's game at home to Hull City, said: "We're very much alike in our thinking which might stem from me living in Jason's house for the first year of my career and spending hours and hours together in the gym and at home which has meant we have formed a very strong relationship.

"It's a special bond between a fighter and trainer.

"When we're in the gym he can anticipate everything that I'm going to do and I can anticipate what he is going to say. I'll be throwing punches on the pads and it gets to the point where he doesn't have to say what combinations to throw, it just flows. It's brilliant, it's like we're telepathic."

"I trust Jason implicitly with my career. He knows his boxing, he's been there, seen it and done it. He's been involved in big British and World title fights, he understands when the going gets tough in a fight because he's been there."

Smith added: "It's another step up for me against Cope. We've had almost the same amount of fights, he's unbeaten and so am I, it's going to be a cracking fight with another title on the line.

"I'll be too fast and strong for Cope though, he's tall at the weight but when he takes one of my shots I think he'll know he's out of his depth."

The 22-year-old returned to action last month for the first time in five months following a hand



Mitchell Smith is back in the ring next month at the Copper Box Arena. Picture: ACTION IMAGES

injury and blasted out unbeaten Welshman Mark Evans inside two rounds.

He said: "Against Evans I showed that my hands are fine and I'm raring to go this year. Winning the English title will be fantastic step up for me and give me a boost as I target a British title by the end of the year.

"I aim to keep busy and put in the performance that keep my fans happy and the press writing about me."

Rowland, who retired from the ring over a decade ago, is delighted with Mitchell's progress and has high hopes for the youngster.

He said: "We get on fantastically and the best thing is it's made me a much better trainer.

"He'll come into the gym looking to try something new on the pads or in sparring that he's thought of and I will have come up with the

same thoughts as well, it's unexplainable.

"I'm glad I've got this special relationship with Mitchell and click the way we have. I'm really excited with him and it's hard not to get carried away because he's a super kid with phenomenal talent and I really believe he's British boxing's next big thing."

The trainer added: "He's the all-round package, he's got a great boxing brain, he can punch hard, superb fitness, tremendous balance, but I feel his biggest attribute is his timing and distance and the way he can makes his opponents miss.

"I really believe in him and I know he can go all the way to a world title."

Tickets for The Power Of London, priced from £40, are available from Eventim on 0844 249 1000 or www.eventim.co.uk.

Wealdstone close in on league title

Wealdstone manager Gordon Bartlett admits the Stones are the only side producing championship winning form ahead of their clash with second-placed Dulwich Hamlet.

The Stones have a ten point lead over Saturday's opponents but also have three games in hand on them as they close in on the Ryman Premier Division title.

Bartlett is refusing to get carried away but insists the onus is on the visitors because of their desperate need for the points.

The Wealdstone boss said: "I stated at the start of the month that you could not win it but could definitely lose the championship in March.

"At the moment we are the only team that have kept up the standard to be champions."

Bartlett added: "They have got to take the game to us but they are the best footballing side in the league and play a very open game.

"We beat them 4-1 away in November but football wise they were better than us. It's just that we were most effective and adapted to the conditions."

Bartlett believes some people are celebrating too soon but this is certainly not the case from him.

Wealdstone only need 16 points from their last ten matches to mathematically ensure promotion.

He said: "Expectation levels have risen now and there are one or two who are already celebrating. But the fat lady is not singing yet."

It is more than 500 minutes since the side conceded a goal after they won 3-0 at Lewes on Tuesday night.

Tom Pett and Luke Pigden fired the visitors in front before a stunning volley from Scott McGleish completed the scoring.

This was the second victory of the week for Bartlett's side after they won 2-0 at Leiston on Saturday.

Charlie Penney grabbed the opening goal for the Stones when he side-footed home.

Wealdstone sealed the points when McGleish powerfully fired the ball into the net for the runaway league leaders.

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