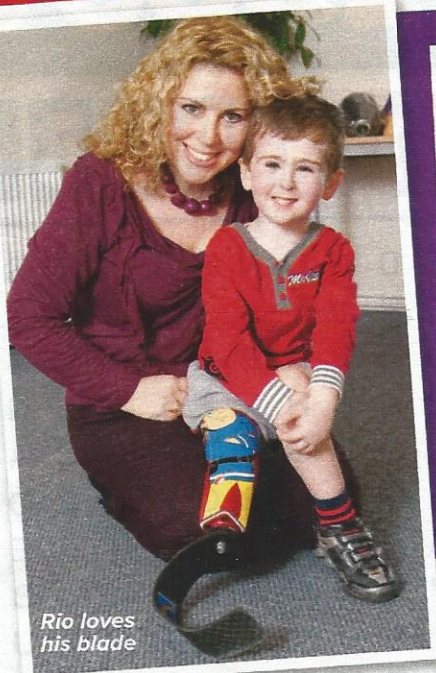


Rio bla



Rio loves his blade

dragging his new leg along behind him.

'Go, Rio!' we cheered.

And, before long, he was

running around with all the other kids at nursery.

Or trying to – Rio's artificial leg was heavy and didn't bend, so he struggled to keep up.

By 3, he'd got fed up with it.

'I don't want to play football, because I can't go fast,' he said.

It broke my heart.

I didn't want Rio thinking sports weren't



A life-changing gift put a spring in Rio's step

By Juliette Woolf, 44, from Bushey, Herts

It was the hardest choice we'd ever make...

'If he's to learn to walk, your son will need his right leg amputated,' explained the doc at St Mary's Hospital, London to me and my husband Trevor.

Our tiny son was just 5 days old.

Little Rio had been born without a right knee joint, shin or ankle joint, a condition called tibial aplasia.

He'd only ever walk if he had his leg amputated through the knee, and used a prosthetic leg – a big decision. But the right one.

So, on 13 August 2009, we took Rio to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in London.

Heartbreakingly, he'd already learned to crawl.

We had a bronze cast made of his tiny foot, in case he ever asked us about it.

But Rio was a star, bounced back from surgery, and was home two days later.

And soon back to his happy self, crawling all over the place!

He had his first prosthetic leg fitted at 17 months, and showed us his determination by learning to pull himself up to stand.

Exactly one year on, he took his first steps across our front room,

for him.

Then, last year, all that changed with the Paralympics. Rio was glued to the telly.

His hero was GB's runner Jonnie Peacock, who'd also lost his right leg and ran using a 'blade'-style prosthetic. We all whooped for joy when he won Gold in the 100m!

Then we took Rio to London, to actually see the Paralympics – he was really



taken by the athletes with their running blades.

'Can I have a special leg, too?' he asked.

I didn't know what to say.

Where we lived, the NHS wouldn't provide blades. And to buy one would cost

thousands. We couldn't afford it.

But how could I say no..?

'Let's see,' I told Rio.

I got to work, contacting