

New leg is 'perfect gift' for Rio

A FOUR-year-old boy who was born without a tibia, knee or ankle joint has been given what his mother describes as the perfect gift – the ability to run.

Rio Woolf had his lower right leg amputated at 14 months. Three years on, like many little boys, he dreams of following in the footsteps of his sporting idol, Jonnie Peacock.

The sprinter ran into the record books, winning a gold medal in the T44 100m at the 2012 Paralympic Games. Now the British hero has improved Rio's chances of following in his footsteps.

Rio first met the gold medalist at a filming promo for Limb Power's Sport Fest – an open weekend event set up by the British Paralympic Association to encourage disabled youngsters to take up sport. Touched by the youngster's enthusiasm for the Summer Paralympics, the blade runner put Rio's parents in contact with Dorset Orthopaedic.

This prompted Bob Watts, managing director at the clinic to set about securing sponsorship for an Össur running blade. In fact, he decided to donate the prosthetic socket himself.

Juliette Woolf, Rio's mum, said "London 2012 transformed Rio's life

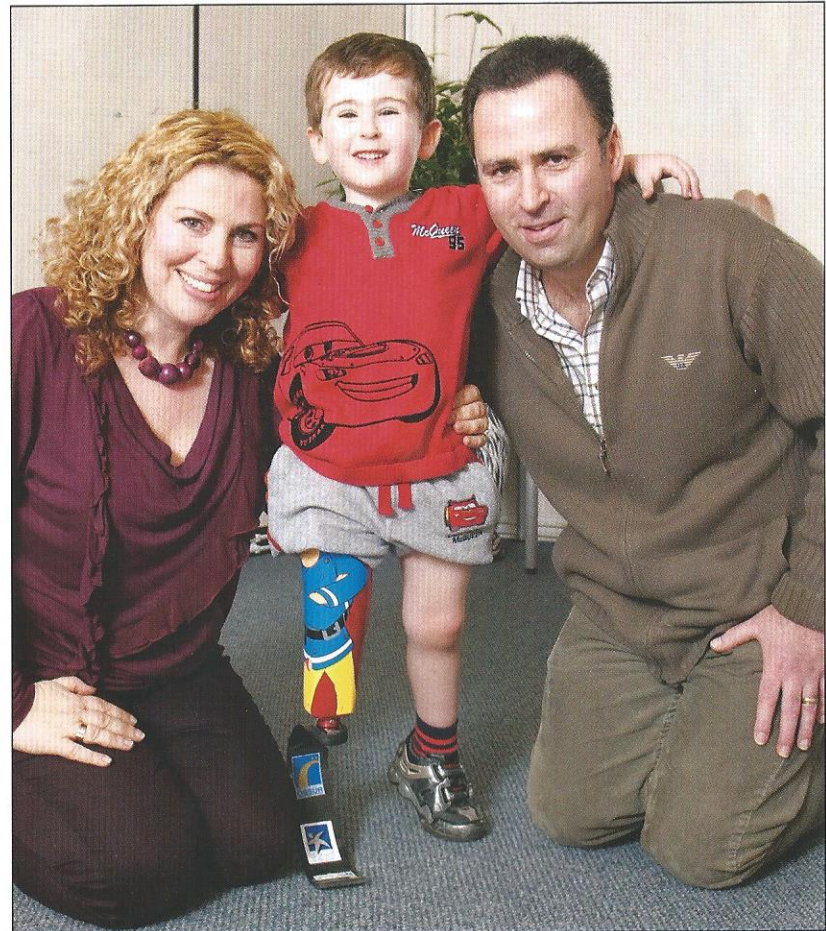
– from being downhearted about not being able to run as fast as his friends earlier in the year, he was then inspired and motivated watching "people with special legs running".

"We took Rio along to the Paralympic Primary Games for children and he loved participating, even with his NHS leg. He showed he loved to run. The only problem was that his old NHS leg was very heavy. Despite this he was running quite fast, he had the speed but not the right equipment."

Rio was fitted with a lightweight carbon-fibre blade decorated with his favourite character Fireman Sam.

Bob said: "The blade and socket we have had made for Rio is 150g lighter than the NHS prosthetic legs. The blade is made out of carbon fibre which is very light, springs back into shape, and 95 per cent of energy you put into it will come back during running."

Rio plans to attend Limb Power's Learn to Run Clinic in Chelmsford on March 9th. Hayley Ginn, Jonnie Peacock's former coach, has taken a keen interest in Rio and will be helping him learn to use his blade in the best way to get the most out of it.



Rio with his new leg, mum Juliette and dad Trevor.

Photo credit: Peter Willows/BNPS.