



OFF ... Tara Panayis, centre, with sisters Cassie and Jadie. Picture: David Clark

## Girl who runs like the wind sends many spirits soaring

**Greg Stolz**

FOR nine-year-old amputee Tara Panayis, the rush of running is the same as it is for any able-bodied kid.

"I like running because it's faster than walking and you get to feel the wind going past you," Tara said.

"I like to run like the wind. That's what my mum and dad tell me — run like the wind."

Tara did just that in the Gold Coast Marathon last year, competing in the 2.25km Junior Dash event just three weeks after having had a prosthetic leg fitted.

Now she is lining up for another run and, in a tribute to her courage, has been made the junior ambassador for this year's marathon on July 5.

The Gold Coast girl was born with a bent left tibia and had to wear a clunky brace to walk.

After she got a serious infection in her leg in 2007, a decision was made to have it amputated and have her fitted with a prosthetic leg.

She competed in the 2008 Gold Coast Marathon with her twin sister Jadie and older sister Cassie, 10.

"By the time Tara made it past the start

line, she was already coming in last," marathon general manager Cameron Hart said.

"But in true Tara spirit, she pushed on with her crutches. The only time she slowed down was halfway through the race when she had to stop and re-adjust her leg."

Premier and keen runner Anna Bligh, who officially launched the marathon yesterday and will line up in the half-marathon, said Tara was an inspiration.

"On the cold, wet mornings when I don't want to get up (to run), I think 'well if Tara can do it. I can do it'," she said.