



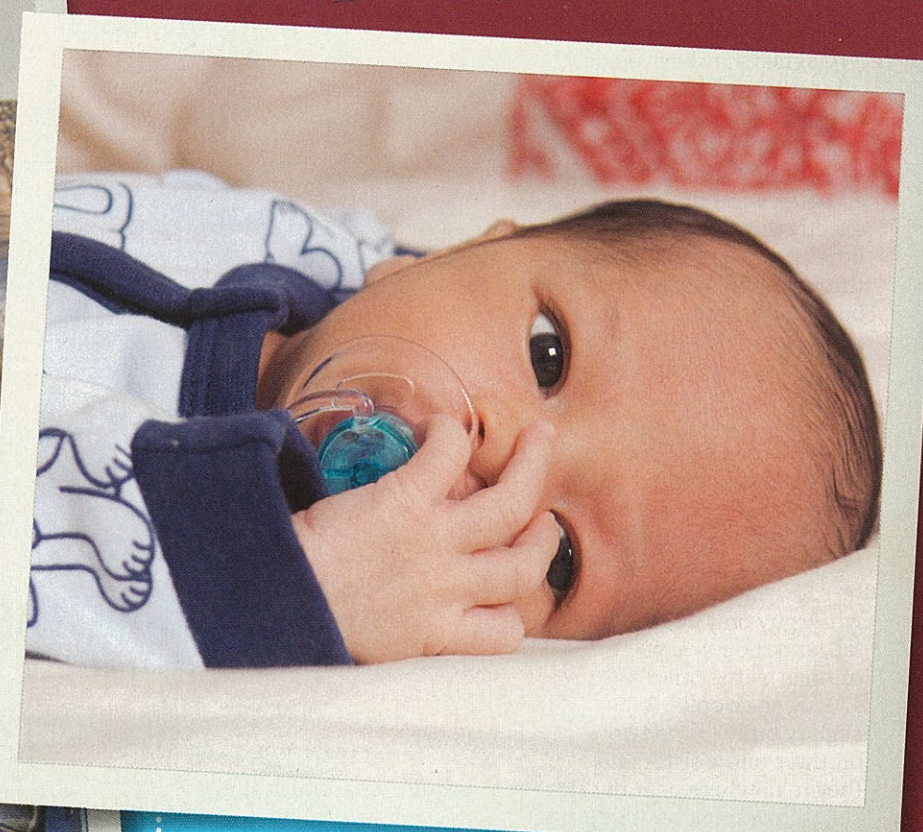
▶▶ Baby Charles is already striking a champ's pose, just like his dad on hit show *Gladiators*.

GLADIATORS' STRONGEST STAR IS A PUSHOVER WHEN IT COMES TO HIS NEW SON CHARLES

Challengees on TV's *Gladiators* are finding it impossible to beat professional strongman Derek Boyer, aka Thunder. Little do they know that a 3.2kg baby boy managed to bring him to his knees without even raising a finger!

On April 9, Derek's partner and soon-to-be bride Sally Imeson gave birth to their gorgeous son Charles Alfred Boyer. The instant the 190cm-tall Gladiator held the 50cm-long bub in his massive, 54cm-bicep arms, he couldn't help but surrender to his tiny conqueror.

"When I saw how beautiful he was, I got all choked up and I just



Meet Charles

NAME: Charles Alfred Boyer
DATE OF BIRTH: April 9, 2008
WEIGHT: 3.2kg LENGTH: 50cm

Thunder's BABY BOY

melted," Derek happily admits. "I felt like raising his little fist in the air and telling him, 'You're the champ, little mate - the champion of the whole world!'"

Derek, 38, officially recognised as Australia's strongest man for the past 11 years, and Sally, 29, a lecturer in sports management,

middle name, Alfred, is in honour of Derek's father, but Charles was chosen for a different reason.

While looking up the meaning of various monikers, they discovered that Charles means "free man" and "warrior". Given that Fiji-born

'WHEN I SAW HOW BEAUTIFUL HE WAS, I GOT ALL CHOKED UP'

PICTURES: BEN ROTHSTEIN.

nutrition and health at the Gold Coast's Bond University, chose to learn their baby's sex before he was born, leaving them plenty of time to agonise over names. His

Derek is descended from a long line of Pacific Island warriors, the new parents figured the name would suit their son nicely. ▶▶





'I FEEL REALLY TERRIBLE ABOUT BEING AWAY FROM SALLY AT SUCH A TIME'

▶▶ The baby's due any day now, but Derek's commitments may see him miss his son's birth.

... became engaged 10 months later. "It wasn't even a leap year, but I did the proposing," she admits with a cheeky grin. "From the first moment I laid eyes on Derek, I thought he was the most beautiful-looking man I'd ever seen, and soon discovered he's just as beautiful in other ways as well. "As big and as strong as Derek is, he's always so wonderfully gentle and caring. I didn't hesitate to propose to him. It wasn't taking any chances with him getting away!" Sally says that when they first met, she had no idea that this gentle giant competed in international strongman contests. All she knew about

him was that he worked in the security industry. "He's so modest he hardly mentioned anything about his amazing weight-lifting achievements, but I gradually found out he can do incredible things, such as flipping cars over on their side and pulling a 52-tonne truck. He's been undefeated in Australian strongman contests since 1997 and he's also been Australia's sole representative at international strongman contests ever since," Sally says proudly.

Unfortunately, before he knew that Sally was pregnant, Derek made a contractual commitment to represent Australia at the 2008 World's Strongest Man Grand Prix to be held in Moscow just days before Sally is due to give birth in mid-April.

MIGHT MISS BIRTH

"I feel really terrible about being away from Sally at such a time," says Derek, who has a surprisingly soft voice for such a big man. "But having signed the contract, there's just no way I can get out of going. "And this Grand Prix has come along straight after the long separations we had while I was

working on *Gladiators* for four straight months in the Telstra Dome in Sydney. "I desperately want to be there with her for the birth of our son. But I guess, we'll just have to hope she doesn't have the baby prematurely while I'm away in Moscow. I'd feel really terrible if that happened."

FILM STAR DREAM

As well as being famous for being strong, Derek has also appeared on the big screen. In 2004 he played a nightclub bouncer in the feature movie *Strange Bedfellows*, starring Paul Hogan and Michael Caton, and more recently he appeared with Holly Valance in the action movie *DOA: Dead or Alive*. Now he's hoping his appearances in *Gladiators* will make him better known to film producers and lead to more acting roles. "Gladiators has been the happiest working experience of my life," says Derek. "There are seven guys and seven girls in the series – and for some reason we all just seemed to click from day one, like a big happy family. "It's a gruelling show, but I never once heard anyone complain. We just loved turning up for work every day. "I'm sure the *Gladiators* show will be a massive success," smiles Sally, patting her baby bump and looking lovingly at the daddy-to-be. "Derek's a truly unique man, and I feel blessed to have found him."

BY ALAN VEITCH
▶▶ *Gladiators* screens at 6.30pm Sundays on the Seven Network.