

BROWARD GIRLS' SWIMMER OF THE YEAR: ALIA ATKINSON

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ATTN: SPORTS EDITORS

FROM: AMATEUR SWIMMING ASSOCIATION OF JAMAICA

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The following was taken off the Florida Sun Sentinel website:

By Sharon Robb, Staff Writer (Florida Sun Sentinel) Posted December 7 2004

PEMBROKE PINES · At 15, Alia Atkinson already has accomplished more than most swimmers do in a lifetime.

The Flanagan senior from Jamaica competed in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. She came home with a renewed enthusiasm to work even harder over the next four years. "The first time you go to the Olympics, especially as young as I am, you go for the experience," Atkinson said. "The second time is much different."

Atkinson, who plans to enroll at Broward Community College and take some early college courses until she becomes old enough to swim at a Division I school, was just as motivated to compete in high school meets as she was in Athens.

She was the most dominant female swimmer in Broward County this season, earning South Florida Sun-Sentinel Girls Swimmer of the Year honors. She is the first Jamaican-born swimmer to be selected for the award.

At the State 3A meet, she was the county's only double winner, sweeping state titles in the 100-yard freestyle and 100-yard breaststroke in the county's fastest times. She won every meet, including district and region. She said she is just scratching the surface of her potential.

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Atkinson started competing at age 11 and has made remarkable progress under the tutelage of her coach, Chris Anderson, of Comets Swim Team in Pembroke Pines. The two came up with a training plan and stuck with it. "I know I have the ability to swim faster," Atkinson said. "It's up to me and how hard I work."

"Competing in the Olympics was a great experience and so was high school. My goals are to work hard and get faster. It's nice when I got back from the Olympics people knew who I was. But I wanted to make a name for myself by swimming fast and doing well for Jamaica. I know they are expecting big things out of me. I am, too."

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