

ALL-AREA SWIMMING

Booker: McKayla Lightbourn



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Booker's McKayla Lightbourn is the Herald-Tribune All-Area girls swimmer of the year.

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McKayla Lightbourn isn't an imposing person physically.

That is, until she dives into a swimming pool and leaves the competition in her wake.

The Booker High School senior speaks softly and has to be pressed to talk about her numerous accomplishments that not only include her stellar prep career but as a leading member of the Bahamian National Team.

Lightbourn closed out her final season at Booker by winning her third consecutive FHSAA Class 2A Finals gold medal in the 200-yard individual medley and placing third in the 100-backstroke.

It's not a surprise that Lightbourn has been selected as the Herald-Tribune's Girls Swimmer of the Year in a vote by area coaches, where Riverview sophomore Ashlee Linn and Ashley Reid, a [Lakewood Ranch](#) junior, were also contenders for the No. 1 honor.

Lightbourn helped Booker coach Ed Coyne's team to a sixth-place finish in the team standings of the 97-school FHSAA meet.

Lightbourn, Booker's captain, maintains dual citizenship in the Bahamas. She teamed with Meghan Buckley-Cramer, Katie Boehm and McKenzie Clark to finish eighth in the 400-free relay.

Throughout her rapid development, including with the national championship Sarasota Family YMCA youth program, Lightbourn has been able to become stronger, which translates into her improving the sport's four strokes that she has mastered.

"Growing, and the fact that the competition has been right on me, has pushed me a little," said Lightbourn, who has signed to swim at Florida State and intends to major in exercise and diet. "I'm happy with my high school career. I've been able to accomplish quite a few of my goals.

"I want to continue to work hard with the Sharks and concentrate on preparing for the Carifta Games (a Caribbean showcase in April in Jamaica)."

Coyne is relentless in his high praise for Lightbourn, who this past season became Booker's all-time leading point collector.

"McKayla is not that big, but she's such a great little fighter," Coyne said. "She's a fierce, fierce competitor. We've had some great swimmers at Booker and McKayla certainly ranks right up there with the best of them.

"McKayla is a great team leader and goes out and leads by example with all of her hard work. She's always working. It has been an extreme pleasure and honor to have McKayla be part of our swimming program. We don't have many in the way of numbers (personnel), but the ones we do have are extremely solid. That says a lot right there."

Lightbourn is the daughter of Gary and Michelle Lightbourn.

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