

April 9, 2007

By Dominic Lee

The penultimate finals session of the 2007 Carifta Games indicated the true quality of age group swimming in the Caribbean region. After two grueling nights of competition, records continued to tumble at the National stadium.

The first victim was the Girls 13-14 200 I.M which was taken down by **McKayla Lightbourn** (Bahamas) in **2:22.80**, a full five seconds underneath her own mark ironically. In typical fashion, Lightbourn then took the 50 Breast (**35.04**) in her 6th meet record of the competition proving the efficiency of her training program back in Sarasota, Florida.

Arianna Vanderpool-Wallace (Bahamas) made evident her intentions to qualify for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing next summer. In the Girls 15-17 100 Free, Wallace's time of **57.92** was within 0.7 of the FINA B qualifying standard and also her 7th individual gold medal. **Nataha Moodie** (Jamaica)-**58.67** and **Ariel Weech** (Bahamas)-**59.99** took silver and bronze respectively. **Alicia Lightbourne** (Bahamas) recovered from a bad start to capture her first title of the meet in the Girls 15-17 50 Breast (**34.19**). Lightbourne just barely hit the wall before local **Natasha Moodie** who took silver in **34.26**.

Kimberlee John Williams (Trinidad and Tobago) added three more gold medals to her already impressive tally. She opened out the night with victory in the Girls 11-12 200 I.M (**2:35.84**) and then swept the 100 Free (**1:02.74**) and 200 Fly (**2:34.91**). **Je'Nae Saunders** (Bahamas) rode the wave of Bahamian dominance to lower the Girls 11-12 50 Breast record in **37.07**. **Ashley Butler** also gave her Bahamian supporters something to cheer about in the Girls 13-14 100 Free. Butler was practically outside smoke as she won the race out of lane 7 with a solid time of **1:01.11** to win her first individual gold. **Kendese Nangle** (Jamaica) won silver in the Girls 11-12 200 I.M (**2:39.84**) and bronze in the 100 Free (**1:03.81**) while **Kimba Collymore** and **Samantha Rahael** also medaled.

Christian Homer (Trinidad) was the most prominent male performer of the evening. He mined gold in the Boys 13-14 200 I.M with a personal best time of **2:15.48** just a few tenths shy of the record set in 2003 by Olympian **Shaune Fraser**. Homer produced a second gold medal swim when he swam a controlled race in the 200 Fly to take the top spot in **2:13.14** once more eluded by Fraser's mark but nevertheless a quality swim.

Branden Whitehurst (US Virgin Islands) won two more gold this evening; first in the Boys 15-17 200 I.M (**2:11.38**) and then in the 100 Free(**53.14**). The absence of the defending champion **Brad Hamilton**(Jamaica) was noticeable. Recovering from earlier disappointment, Hamilton bounced back to win with a breath taking effort of **29.91** in the 50 Breast.

Young **Evante Gibson**(Bahamas) is having a sensational meet. He claimed another meet record in the Boys 11-12 50 Breast(**33.71**). Gibson also won silver in the 100 Free a few minutes later behind **Valy Pelagie**(French Antilles) who has been his rival throughout the meet. Pelagie who is also having an equally successful campaign posted a time of **58.74** just below the mark of **58.75** by **Rodion Davelaar**. Other gold medal performances came from **Laurent Geran** (French Antilles) in the Boys 11-12 200 I.M(**2:28.05**), **Brent Thompson** (Bahamas) in the boys 13-14 50 Breast(**32.92**) and **Vince Regent**(French Antilles) in the Boys 13-14 100 Free(**55.51**).

Relay action produced two more records. First in the Boys 13-14 800 Free Relay(8:29.58) and then by the Girls 15-17 800 Free Relay. The familiar quartet of **Teisha Lightbourne**, **Alicia Lightbourne**, **Ariel Weech** and **Arianna Vanderpool-Wallace** dispatched its third relay record gold in a time of 9:01.67. At the end of the session the scores remained in a similar arrangement. **The French Antilles** led with **725.5 points** followed closely by **Bahamas (706)** and **Trinidad and Tobago** in third with **632.5**. Tomorrow evening should be quite entertaining.

Action continues on the final day at 9 a.m

