

## THE RETURN OF THE JET



(Courtesy of Elizabeth

Vandewater)

Jevon Atkinson (black trunks) being congratulated on a good swim at the Austin Grand Prix

Friday January 17, 2014 saw the return of Jamaica's fastest swimmer of all time in a 50 metre pool Jevon Atkinson. More than five years since Atkinson emerged from the Olympic pool in Beijing as the only swimmer to breach the 23 second barrier with his national record of 22.83 Jevon has re-joined the competitive fray. Now based in Austin Texas swimming with Nitro swimming Atkinson has his eyes set on Rio 2016 .Along the way he hopes to compete at all the major competitions for Jamaica and put himself in medal contention for the 2016 Olympics.



Courtesy of Elizabeth Vandewater)

### Jevon diving into action

He made that first big splash at the 2014 Austin Grand Prix which ran from Friday January 17 to Sunday January 19 at Lee & Joe Jamail Texas Swimming Center. In his very first event on Friday the 100 metre freestyle he showed signs of what to expect from him this summer. Jevon sped to the first and only wall of the race in **24.44** seconds before stopping the clock in **51.72**. He therefore qualified himself for a return swim later that by placing 16<sup>th</sup> overall and into the B finals of the event. Putting that time in proper context **NO** Jamaican has swum that event as fast as he has since he last competed in 2008. Also few Jamaican swimmers can swim their individual 50 metre freestyle as fast as he swam his opening 50 metres. Additionally if the meet is one that is approved by the CCCAN (Central American and Caribbean Swimming Federation) council he would be the first male Jamaican qualifier for the CAC (Central American and Caribbean) Games to be held this year in Veracruz Mexico from November 15-30. This as he eclipsed the B standard time of **51.87** for the event.

In a different approach to what would be his third Olympic Games the 29 year old Atkinson wants to test the waters in a number of events. So he also swam the 100 metre butterfly .He went out in a respectable

**27.54** which propelled him to a total time of **1:01.05** though bettering his seed time of

**1:04.09**. He was unable to proceed to any of the finals finishing 61<sup>st</sup> overall

The B final of the 100 metre freestyle final proved tough especially after exhausting winter season training. Jevon went out in **24.90** and came back in **52.55** to maintain his placing from the morning swim. The race was won by 2012 London Olympics silver medallist Cullen Jones representing SwimMAC Carolina in **50.63**.

He completed the Friday session of the meet by leading off his Nitro Swimming 400 metre freestyle relay with the third fastest opening leg of **52.53**. Jevon took the race out faster than his B finals race clocking **24.79** for his first 50 metres and helping Nitro to 6<sup>th</sup> place overall in **3:33.83**.

Given the rigours of the Friday's events the Coaching staff at Nitro advised him to concentrate on just the 50 metre freestyle and forgo the 200 metre freestyle. That proved to be a master stroke as he made it to yet another B final with a quick clocking of **23.26** seconds. That time would place him 9<sup>th</sup> overall and the top seed in the B final. Putting that time in context once again **NO** Jamaican swimmer has been that fast in this event since he stopped swimming August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 and pending CCCAN ratification that would beat the A qualifying time for the CAC games of **23.33**. Also pending ASAJ (Amateur Swimming Association of Jamaica) ratification that would meet the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games A standard of **23.36**.

Later he would return to place second in **23.30** nipped to the finish by Dax Hill of SwimMac Carolina who won in **23.02**. That B final would still have him clearing the A standards needed for both the Commonwealth Games to be held in Scotland from July 23 to August 3 and the CAC Games.

The “JET” ended his Grand prix on Sunday with another strong display of early season speed anchoring Nitro swimming A to fourth place in the 400 metre medley relay .The relay finished strongly as Atkinson had the second fastest freestyle leg of the relay with a time of **51.58** seconds off a quick opening 50 metres of **24.45** seconds

Jevon had the following comments about his performances

*After having been out of competitive swimming for 5 years I wanted to see how my body would handle my first big long course competition. I was pleasantly surprised that I was able to hit those times so early in the year and with only four months of training .Although of course I always want to be faster I am happy that I was able to hit those times back to back in prelims and finals. Meets are the best way to evaluate what is working and what needs to be changed.so that was my goal with this meet and I feel I met that goal perfectly. We were able to identify the rough spots in my technique and are already making the necessary changes to maximize my next performance. Now that I am older, training is bit harder but I am more committed, more focused and more precise than when I was 19. I definitely shook off the rust at this meet and proved to myself that with more hard word I can be one of the best in the world. I am incredibly proud to be able to represent Jamaica again*

Contributed by

Anthony Morrison-Vincent