

Brianna

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She was training for her first triathlon, an event that includes running, bicycling and swimming.

The swimming segment was 50 meters.

Brianna's dad, Randy, had built a sort of buoy that he anchored in the pond about 50 meters from shore.

"That's the first time I ever remember actually trying to do a stroke," Brianna, who's now 17, said.

It wasn't until she moved to Baker City, though, that Brianna swam her first lap in an actual pool.

She was 8 when her family moved — her dad, her mom, Sabrina, and her older sister, Corinna.

Although Corinna started swimming competitively, Brianna didn't immediately follow her older sibling to Sam-O Swim Center.

But her dad insisted that Brianna participate in at least one sport.

She chose swimming.

"I wasn't very good," she says with the sort of laugh that a four-time state champion, who on Saturday, Feb. 19, will seek her fifth and sixth titles, can muster when reminiscing about her humble beginnings.

"I wasn't very fast. But I did like hanging out with people and going to swim meets. My best friends were also on the team, and I liked spending so much time with them."

What she didn't like was running.

She tried track. Briefly. "I can't run," she said, laughing. "It's exhausting. Swimming is exhausting, too, but it uses completely different muscles. I realized I was going to go much faster in swimming."

Brianna continued to compete for Baker's club team for about four years.

She was 12 when she realized that not only did she enjoy swimming, but she might have a talent for the sport.

It was at an outdoor meet — either Pendleton or Walla Walla; she doesn't recall for sure which — when she "finally got a cut time."

That means she swam fast enough to qualify for higher-level competition.

The event was one at which, five years later, she continues to excel — the butterfly.

That's the somewhat awkward-looking — and absolutely exhausting — stroke where the swimmer, rather than alternating arms as in freestyle or backstroke, lifts both arms clear of the water simultaneously and then plunges both hands into the water.

From then on, swimming was Brianna's sport.

"I never played a sport that has a ball in it," she said with a smile.

Tragedy, and back to Baker

When Brianna was 12 and just starting seventh grade, her family returned to California.

Her mom, who worked for the U.S. Forest Service, had been offered a new job.

But less than a month later, Sabrina Stadler died.

Gallstones affected her pancreas, Randy Stadler said. His wife died just four days after falling ill.

With two young daughters to raise, he decided to return to Baker City.



Brianna Stadler works on her butterfly technique on Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022, at Sam-O Swim Center in Baker City. Stadler has won state titles in both the butterfly and the backstroke, and she will compete in both events, in the 100-yard races, at the state meet on Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022.



Brianna Stadler, a senior at Baker High School, has won four state championships during her high school career.

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— Brianna Stadler

Although her life had been irrevocably changed, Brianna still had one place where she could go, and where, at least briefly, it seemed that all was as it had been.

The pool. "I think I was swimming to cope," she said. "Being in the water was my therapy. It was something that I could control."

After returning to Baker City, Brianna said she started swimming faster.

Her mom, she said, inspired her then, and does today.

"When I first started swimming, my mom was around," Brianna said. "When we went back to Baker, that's when I started doing really well. I think my memories of her pushed me."

High school, and state championships

As a freshman in the winter of 2019, Brianna joined her sister, Corinna, on the Baker High School swim team.

At the swim meet in Beaverton that February, Brianna had a spectacular debut. Not only did she win the 100-yard backstroke event, but she set a new state record with a time of 56.54 seconds.

She also placed third in the 200-yard individual medley, which consists of 50-yard segments in freestyle, backstroke, butterfly and breaststroke.

Looking back at that meet three years ago, Brianna still seems surprised at what she accomplished.

She knew her times in the 100 backstroke gave her a good chance to win the event.

"Getting the record — I didn't even think about it," she said. "I didn't even know what the record was."

But her dad did know.

And when she touched the wall at the end of the race and looked at the scoreboard showing her time, her dad was there, telling her that the record was hers.

The 2019 state meet was the only one when Brianna competed with her sister, Corinna, who was a senior and is a student now at Eastern Oregon University. The sisters were members of two relay teams that swam at the meet.

"That was one of my favorite years swimming," Brianna said.

Although Brianna concedes that her record-setting performance in 2019 added pressure to the rest of her high school swimming career, she continued to excel.

In the 2020 state meet, as a sophomore, she won the 100-yard butterfly and placed second in the 100 backstroke.

The pandemic interrupted her junior year in 2021, pushing the state meet from February to June.

But that had no effect on Brianna's speed through the water. She won both the 100 butterfly and 200 individual medley events, boosting her collection of state titles to four.

Brianna said she decided to forego the 100 backstroke — the event in which she set the



Brianna Stadler prepares to start a backstroke practice session at Sam-O Swim Center in Baker City on Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022.

state record as a freshman — in favor of the 200 individual medley.

But because the medley is so demanding — twice the distance, and with all four strokes required — she felt that swimming in that event would make it harder for her to compete for another state title in the 100 backstroke.

So this year she focused on the 100 butterfly and 100 backstroke.

At the regional meet in Madras on Feb. 12, Brianna easily won the 100 backstroke.

In the 100 butterfly she was ahead for most of the race, but Adrienne Tam of Catlin Gabel overtook her just before the final touch of the wall.

Brianna said Tam transferred to Catlin Gabel, a private school in Portland, this year. The two had not competed against each other before.

"She kind of came out of nowhere," Brianna said of Tam. "She's fast."

But Brianna said her goals at the state meet are to swim certain times — she's not as concerned about whether she wins two more state titles.

"Of course I would love to win again," she said with a smile.

And although Brianna recognizes that this will be her final time competing for Baker High School, she also knows that her swimming career will continue.

She signed a letter of intent in November to compete for Colorado Mesa University in

Grand Junction starting this fall.

"It takes a little bit of pressure off, that I'm not finishing my career," Brianna said. "But it still is my last time racing in high school and in Oregon."

Brianna plans to study psychology and advertising at Colorado Mesa.

She doesn't have a specific career goal, but she would like to live somewhere with abundant outdoor recreation and work in a job that doesn't have a 9 to 5 routine. She said she would prefer to run her own business or work for a small company.

Dad steps in as coach

In the tropical atmosphere inside Sam-O Swim Center on the late afternoon of Tuesday, Feb. 15, Brianna crouches on the starting block at the west end of the pool.

She dives in, leaving the scarcest of splashes, and by the time she rises to the surface she's already a few yards from the wall. She glides through the water with a smooth economy of movement that's decidedly different from the somewhat awkward thrashing that a less experienced swimmer might display.

In four days Brianna will compete for Baker High School for the last time.

Brianna's senior year has been noteworthy not only for

her performance in the pool.

After longtime BHS coach Paula Moe decided to step down this season, Randy Stadler agreed to replace her as coach.

Brianna said that although her dad has always supported her — starting with building that buoy for the mill pond — having him as coach has inspired her.

"I really like having him push me," she said. "I feel like I've improved more this year. He's been a big motivation the past few years, pushing me to keep going."

That includes during the pandemic, when extended closures of Sam-O Swim Center — the only local pool — forced Brianna to don a wet suit and return, in a sense, to where she started in that mill pond.

Brianna swam at both Phillips Reservoir and, more improbably, in the Powder River in Baker City, where she found a reach with sufficient current that she could swim against it and basically remain in one spot.

Brianna also credits Kate Johnson, who swam at Oregon State University and has been assisting Randy Stadler with the BHS team this year, with helping to fine-tune her technique.

And in competitive swimming, technique is at least as important as pure physical ability, Brianna said.

She does a fair amount of training outside the pool, to be sure — riding a stationary bike for a cardiovascular workout, using a rowing machine and lifting weights for the upper body strength that's so vital for a swimmer.

But there is simply no substitute, she said, for actually swimming.

"If you want to be good at it you just have to swim a lot of yards," she said. "You have to learn to control your body in the water."

A swimmer who is in excellent physical shape but lacks technique will make a big splash — literally — but won't move through the water very quickly, she said.

As Brianna ponders the conclusion of her decorated high school swimming career, and prepares for graduation and the move to Colorado and new challenges, both academically and athletically, she also thinks back to the experiences that brought her to Baker City, and then brought her back.

She sits at a picnic table in the chilly February twilight outside Sam-O Swim Center, the pool where she honed her natural talent and where she has spent so many hours toiling in the unique atmosphere.

Competitive swimming, Brianna agrees, has something in common with running.

But runners can usually see their fellow competitors, separated only by open air.

Racing in water is an altogether different experience.

"It's very mental," Brianna said. "And you have to push yourself, physically."

And although her future as a swimmer will play out mostly in other, bigger pools, she'll always remember Sam-O, and Baker City.

"Moving back was definitely the smartest option."

Design

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- Upgrading security and access control at all schools, including improved security cameras, fire alarms and public address systems, as well as key card systems and door sensors to control access. The district will also create secure entry vestibules at Brooklyn and South Baker.

- Replacing the leak-prone roof at South Baker.

More information about the bond projects is available at www.bakersdbond.org/.

Unions

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"They're on a rotating schedule," Cannon said. "They typically have run three-year contracts and they expire alternately."

That means the city doesn't have to negotiate two or three contracts in one year.

This year, however, the city does have two of the three contracts expiring June 30, 2022.

Those are for the Baker City Professional Firefighters union, and the Baker City Employees Association, which represents public works employees.

The contract with the firefighters was slated to expire

June 30, 2020, but the City Council twice approved one-year extensions, the last continuing the contract through June 30, 2022.

The public works union's three-year contract, approved in 2019, expires the same day.

Cannon said city officials have been negotiating with the firefighters union since 2021, and those talks continue.

"We're still in discussions about some of the particulars of the contract and we hope to

wrap those up sometime this year," Cannon said.

Negotiations are also underway with the public works union, and Cannon expects to have a contract proposal this spring for the City Council to consider.

"We anticipate we'll finish those this year pretty handily," Cannon said.

Negotiations with the police union will likely start next year, as that contract continues through June 30, 2023.

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We, the family of **Wayne Erickson**, wish to thank everyone for the cards, flowers, food, memorial contributions, and outpouring of love and support during our recent time of sadness. You are so appreciated! Sharla, Jason, Staci, and Robin Erickson.

KIWANIS STUDENT OF THE MONTH

FEBRUARY

Baker City Kiwanis

Sponsored By

Baker County
UNLIMITED
the Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center

Junior at Baker High School.

Tristan Curry

Freshman at Baker High School.

Glen Taylor

Thank you

Pat & Nadine Gwynon

would like to thank everyone for all the cards, flowers, and phone calls for their 70th wedding anniversary. How special we feel to have so many close and loving friends!
Love and God's Blessings to all!