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# Coolmine drowning tragedy

A 10 year old Blakestown boy was the victim of a tragic drowning accident at Coolmine Sports Complex. Peter Whelan from Whitestown Avenue, a pupil in Scoil Mhuire National School, was enjoying a Saturday afternoon swim in the Centre's pool with his older brother and friends when the tragedy occurred.

Peter's family and the management of the sports complex are appealing for witnesses to help piece together how the incident actually happened. A man who tried to assist Peter has come forward following an earlier appeal, but staff at the Centre point out that there were approximately 30 other people in the pool at the time and have appealed to them to come forward also.

It is understood that the incident happened at around 3.15 p.m. on Saturday 1st March. Peter and his friends were seen swimming the width of the pool. After that there appears to be a short unaccounted for gap in the accounts following which Peter was discovered at the bottom of the pool.

Peter was taken from the pool by an adult and two other children and the life-guard immediately applied mouth to mouth resuscitation while a call was made to the emergency services. An ambulance and fire engine arrived within three or four minutes according to Coolmine staff and the medics took over the resuscitation work. Peter was rushed to Connolly Hospital but was pronounced dead at 4.30 p.m.

"Peter was a great little sportsman. He lived for sport", said his uncle, Noel Whelan. "Only that morning he was man of the match playing for Mountview FC and he was in line for player of the year at the club. He was a lovely kid - he loved his designer gear and

he also liked to gel his hair," Noel reminisced.

Peter had gone swimming in the centre with his older brother Christopher (12) who is a pupil in Coolmine Community School. "Both brothers were the best of friends", said Noel.

According to Michael Phillips, manager of Coolmine Sports Centre, there are always two fully qualified lifeguards on duty during public opening times at the pool. "This is the first fatality we have had since the pool opened 34 years ago and we are devastated by the news.

"I want to extend our sympathy to all of the Whelan family for this dreadful tragedy. We are appealing for anyone who was present in the pool at the time to come forward and we are anxious to find out exactly what did happen and to bring closure to the matter for the family," he said.

There was a huge turnout for Peter's funeral in Blakestown and to Mulhuddart cemetery afterwards. Speaking to a

packed church, Noel Whelan expressed the family's thanks to the staff of Connolly Hospital and Coolmine Sports Centre for their assistance and he also thanked all their many friends and neighbours "for their support at this terrible time."


Speaking to *Community Voice*, Peter's grandmother Pauline Valentine, who lives in Woodlands in Blakestown also paid tribute to Sr. Zoe

and the staff of St. Joseph's in Clonsilla, where she and Peter's mother, Elizabeth work. "They provided us with great support over the past few days and we are very grateful for their kindness," she said.

Anyone with any information about Peter's death is asked to contact the gardai at Blanchardstown Garda Station (tel. 6667000) or Coolmine Sports Centre (tel. 8214 549).

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