

The death of local sportsman Paul Gallihawk, as he participated in his first triathlon at Larkfield's Leybourne Lakes, is so incredibly sad. I send my sincere condolences to his family and friends. From all the reports in the papers and on the news it seems he was a much loved young man who was involved very heavily in sport and he will be extremely missed.

I didn't know Paul and I sincerely hope his family do not mind me writing about him, but it is odd how a complete stranger's life or story can somehow connect with you. Paul had played football and set up a team which he continued to run. It was telling how much of the football community shared their grief, and condolences, after it was announced his missing body had been found. He also, from the accounts I have read in the papers, relished new physical challenges, especially ones that allowed him to push himself and set goals but at the same time raise money for good causes. The triathlon he was competing in was his first and he had set himself a very modest target for fundraising – a target that, incidentally, has now been met many times over thanks to the generosity of people touched by this tragic story.

As a person so heavily connected to sport, both personally and professionally, it always touches me when people pass away doing something they love. Every activity involves a challenge – physical or mental – and triathlon does both. I shared digs with a triathlete at university and it was a real eye opener not just to the training required but to the amount of preparation that it takes to compete, even at a fun level, but it is an amazing sport and one day I shall try it myself.

Paul's passing is a tragedy. However I am sure that he will be seen as an inspiration for what it was he set out to achieve and the way he applied himself to achieve it. May he rest in peace.