Cooley

From Page 1

should be warned about the dangers of playing near open drainage ditches.

Those close to Paul said yesterday that he was just the sort of voracious competitor — and occasionally a somewhat reckless daredevil — who would try to swim the flooded creek.

Claude Cooley recalled giving his son a toy truck when he was just a toddler. Before long, the boy was riding the truck like a skateboard down the driveway outside their house on Inverness Drive.

"He showed no fear," his father said.

Paul also excelled in soccer and other sports, and played drums in the school band at Northwest Middle School in Justin. But his first love was swimming, which he discovered at 8.

Greg Ryback, who coincidentally began managing Trophy Club's swim team the same year, said Paul possessed a combination of talent, determination and work ethic that is rare among young athletes.

In addition to recapturing his individual championship last year from swimmers from 260 cities across the state, Paul also led the Trophy Club's four-man relay team to first place.

Ryback, a former competitive swimmer himself, said he is confident that his young student was bound for the Olympics.

"He was a great swimmer," Ryback said. "He had so much drive, so much ambition, so much power, I believe he would have made it."

Ryback said his 13-year-old son, John, also is a member of the swim team and was close friends with Paul. The two boys had talked about enrolling together at the University of Notre Dame and pursuing their swimming careers together.

While cleaning out his fallen teammate's school locker yesterday, John stumbled across a book about Americans who have competed in the Olympics. The book is titled *Going For The Gold.*

The medals Paul won in statewide competition will be draped around his neck during services scheduled for 10 a.m. tomorrow at St. Francis Catholic Church in Grapevine.