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City officials await historical study to move ahead on demolitions

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

It's been more than a year since the City of Russellville received a \$300,000 grant for demolition of 11 dilapidated structures, but the projects remain in limbo and history, quite literally, is not on the city's side. The funding was approved through a Community Development Block Grant administered by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs from funds made available by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The total project cost is expected to be around \$341,000, with \$300,000 in grant funds and the balance coming from the City of Russellville and Russellville City Schools, which owns College Avenue Elementary School, one of the 11 properties slated for demolition. Although city officials received the grant in January 2022, the demolition process is on hold pending the completion of a study by the Alabama Department of Archives and History as to the historical significance of each building to be demolished. Until that historical study is

See 'STRUCTURE,' Page 7

Dowdy facing multiple lawsuits, charges from dog attacks

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With the filing of a lawsuit on behalf of the estate of an Alabama Department of Public Health worker killed in a dog mauling last April, there are now two civil actions and four felony charges pending against Red Bay resident Brandy Dowdy. The civil action brought by by Max D. Wright, as Administrator of the Estate of Jacqueline Summer Beard, was filed December 15, 2022. A previous lawsuit on behalf of Michelle Sheeks against Dowdy and her father, Billy Joe Crumpton, was filed June 16, 2022. At the time of that filing, Sheeks was hospitalized from injuries she

received in a vicious dog attack the morning of April 28, 2022. Sheeks was walking near County Highway 11 in Red Bay when a pack of dogs attacked and mauled her. Sheeks was hospitalized for more than two months before succumbing to her injuries on July 14, 2022. Her death means the lawsuit will be modified to include a wrongful death count. According to the attorney who filed the lawsuit, it will be amended to be brought in the name of the Administrator of the Estate of Michelle Sheeks. Although the June lawsuit only named Dowdy, the alleged owner of the dogs, and Crumpton, who owned the property alleged to have been

See 'LAWSUIT' Page 9

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*Emma Rumell Hovater, 98, of Russellville, passed
away January 6, 2023. Spry Memoria Chapel assist-
ed the family.*

*Gary Wayne Scott, 76, of Hackleburg, AL passed
away Sunday, January 1, 2023. Akins Funeral Home
assisted the family.*

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the web at www.franklinfreepress.net! Send your guest columns,
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Council pays annual workers compensation premium

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved payment of an annual premium for workers compensation insurance at a short January 3rd meeting.

The \$56,371 payment to Alabama's Municipal Workers Compensation Fund was for workers compensation coverage for the city's full-time workers.

Councilman Darren Woodruff asked for an update on the demolition of 11 properties to be paid for by a \$300,000 grant received by the City of Russellville last year.

Demolition of the properties, which include College Avenue Elementary School, the old Winston florist and a home donated to the city by the Norris family on property to be used for construction of a new library/media center, is on hold until the completion of a study by the Alabama



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Department of Archives and History.

City Building Inspector Bill Fuller said he's working on consent forms for each property owner to sign to allow the contractor to come onto the property for the demolition.

The next regular meeting will be January 17, 2023, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.

Please send your guest columns and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

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Franklin Free Press

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Correction Policy

The Franklin Free Press strives for excellence and accuracy, and we will be pleased to correct any error in our newspaper. To request a correction or clarification, call or e-mail our office.

Letters to the editor

The Franklin Free Press is published by hometown people, for hometown people. We urge contributions of all kinds, including guest columns, picture submissions, cartoons or letters to the editor. Send any letters to our office via U.S. Postal Service or e-mail, and we will gladly publish them. Letters must be signed and contain the hometown and phone number of the author. The Franklin Free Press reserves the right to edit letters for style, length and content.

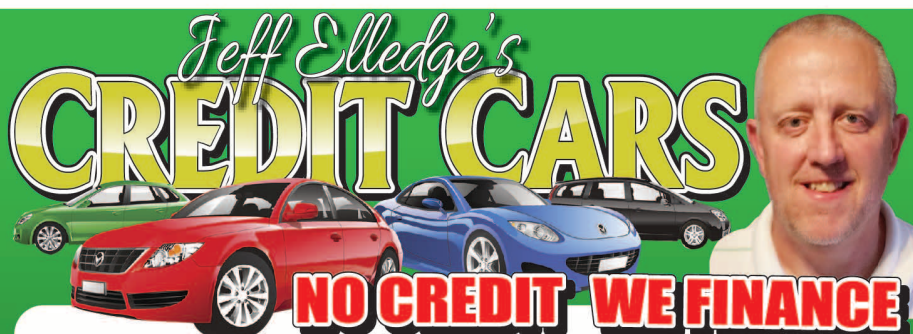
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 **T**he Senior Center at Phil Campbell is under new management. The Town of Phil Campbell would like to invite and encourage everyone in our area that is 60 years and older to come be a part of the group. This is for men and women. They meet at the Phil Campbell Community Center Monday thru Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00. A delicious lunch is served around 11:00 a.m. Come on out and join in on the games or just sit and have a cup of coffee and socialize!! So if you, your parents, grandparents or your neighbor is 60 or older, pass the word and come out and enjoy a morning of f

 **T**he Church of God in Phil Campbell invites you to Revival, beginning February 6, 2023, at 6 p.m., with Mary Shalton and Bro. Billy Barlty. The church is located at 77 Mars Hill Road in Phil Campbell. For more information, please call 256-324-5288.

 **A** fund-raiser basketball game will be played between the Russellville Police Department and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office on Saturday, January 14, 2023, at 7 p.m., at the Ralph Bishop Center on Ash Avenue in Russellville. Admission is \$1 per person and concessions will be sold. Funds will be used to purchase needed equipment for both departments.

 **T**he Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee of Franklin County is selling MLK shirts to help support its cause of helping Franklin County students continue their education. The committee is a non-profit that provides scholarships to high school seniors in Franklin County. Hoodies are \$25. Sweatshirts are \$20. Long sleeve t-shirts are \$15. For sizes 2X and above, please add \$2.

 **T**he Cowboy Church of Franklin County is hosting "Love Month" all through February. Their speaker for every Sunday in February will be Jennifer Welch. She will be speaking about love. You won't want to miss this! The church is located at 25100 Highway 24 West in Russellville. Everyone invited!

 **L**iberty Hill Baptist Church will host a Pancake Breakfast for everyone to come together and help feed our community. On Sunday, January 15, 2023, you are invited for a Pancake Breakfast beginning at 7:30 a.m. They will have food and great fellowship as we look forward to the New Year with thanksgiving for all the blessings of 2022 and now for 2023. This event is free of charge, as our Lord has given us the Gift of Salvation without cost. The price of Salvation has been paid in full by Him and He said for all of us to "Feed My Sheep," not only in the physical body but the Spiritual body as well.

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'STRUCTURES,' from Page 1

completed, city officials can not move forward on soliciting bids to perform the demolition work.

"We're working with NACOLG which is negotiating with the Department of Archives and History to get permission on the school and florist building," said Bill Fuller, the City of Russellville Building Inspector. "Once that is done, we'll let the project out for bids. I'm working on consent forms for each property owner to sign that will allow the contractor to come onto their property to do the work."

College Avenue School was constructed in 1936, with an addition built in the early 1950s. School officials are in support of demolishing the structures, as they have been in a continuous state of disrepair for many years.

In addition to College Avenue School, the other properties to be razed include:

- 401, 501, 503 Montgomery St. SE
- 902 S. Washington Ave.
- 726 Jackson Ave. S (old Winston florist building)
- 801, 807 Franklin St. E.
- 108 Lauderdale St. NE
- 550 Fourth St.

One of those properties is the old home donated by the Norris family to the City of Russellville. That property, at 108 Lauderdale St. NE, was donated with the condition it be used to house a new library/media center.

While city leaders support the demolition and debris cleanup on these properties, the process of waiting for the Alabama Department of Archives and History has become frustrating to some.

"I was very excited when we received the grant money from the State of Alabama, only to become frustrated with the delay from the Historical Society," said Russellville City Councilman Darren Woodruff. "This is an unreasonable delay. These buildings should already be down and something already in their place."



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Franklin County Community Development Commission

The following information is the annual report of receipts and expenditures of the Franklin County Community Development Commission for the fiscal year ending 9-30-2022.

The information is "unaudited" and is reported to the citizens of Franklin County to document how these tax dollars are being expended. The Franklin County Community Development Commission is a 4-member board, whose membership for the previous year included: Brad Bolton as Senator Stutts' appointment, Jeremy Campbell, as Representative Kiel's appointment, Chris Wallace as Representative Robertson's appointment and the Chairman of the Commission, Mayor at Large- Charlene Fancher. All grants approved must be within the charter of the development fund which is as follows:

In accordance with Act No. 2008-75 enacted by the Legislature of Alabama, grants may be awarded only for the following purposes:

1. To promote economic development, education, recreation, conservation, and fire protection.
2. To enhance the education of the citizenry through activities, expenditures for capital improvements or equipment, to promote literacy, learning, arts appreciation, public health, and mental health.
3. To promote activities that provide human and social services which reduce the hardships of old age, poor health, or poverty.
4. To promote the marketability, yield, or quality of Alabama-produced agricultural commodities.
5. To promote the preservation, restoration, development and propagation of Alabama's natural resources, recreational facilities, environment, history, culture, transportation lanes, tourism, public safety, and historic landmarks and buildings.

BEGINNING BALANCE FCCDC FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING 10/01/2021	\$59,834.23
TOTAL IN LIEU OF TAXES DEPOSITS RECEIVED THRU 9/30/2022	\$162,529.31
TOTAL INTEREST EARNED THRU 9/30/2022	\$345.37
TOTAL BALANCE AVAILABLE FOR GRANT FUNDING	\$222,708.91

GRANTS AWARDED AS FOLLOWS:

GRANT #	ENTITY:	GRANT AMT:			
2143	Vina High School Cross Country	\$125.00	2196	RHS State Girls Tennis	\$500.00
2144	Belgreen High School Scholars Bowl	\$500.00	2197	RHS State Boys Tennis	\$500.00
2145	Tharptown High School	\$800.00	2198	RHS State Baseball	\$500.00
2146	Belgreen High School	\$800.00	2199	RHS State Boys Soccer	\$500.00
2147	Franklin County Sheriff's Office	\$800.00	2200	RMS -Helmets and shoulder pads	\$2,500.00
2148	Belgreen High School Kindergarten	\$800.00	2201	RHS - Weightroom Updates	\$2,500.00
2149	Tharptown High School Basketball	\$800.00	2202	Franklin Board of Ed-VHS Defibrillator	\$1,500.00
2150	Franklin County Schools	\$2,500.00	2203	PCES - Classroom Chairs	\$1,000.00
2151	Tharptown High School Library	\$800.00	2204	Franklin Archives - Rep/Maint HVAC	\$1,535.96
2152	Vina High School FFA	\$250.00	2205	PCHS Volleyball - Equipment	\$500.00
2153	Phil Campbell Elementary 2nd	\$1,000.00	2206	VHS Track - Repair & Equipment	\$1,500.00
2154	Belgreen High School Science	\$1,000.00	2207	RBHS - Football Sound System	\$2,500.00
2155	Phil Campbell Basketball	\$1,000.00	2208	TES EL Program - Materials & Tools	\$800.00
2156	Phil Campbell Elementary 1st Grade	\$800.00	2209	RMS EL - Dry Erase Board, TV & Mount	\$800.00
2157	Belgreen High School Cross Country	\$125.00	2210	Franklin Board of Ed-PCHS Defibrillator	\$1,500.00
2158	Tharptown High School Basketball	\$950.50	2211	BHS Cheer-Camp Expenses	\$250.00
2159	Red Bay High School Football	\$2,000.00	2212	TES-Wildcat Cares	\$250.00
2160	Phil Campbell Elementary 1st Grade	\$800.00	2213	RB Police Dept - Purchase 7 Bullet Proof Vests	\$2,000.00
2161	Vina High School Dauphin Island	\$500.00	2214	Distinguished Young Women of NWAL-Scholarship	\$500.00
2162	Postage	\$9.54	2215	Town of PC Rescue Squad - Operations/Upkeep	\$500.00
2163	Franklin Co. Sheriff's Dept Vests	\$5,595.00	2216	RB Water & Gas - Water Expansion Project	\$5,000.00
2164	Tharptown High School - Purchase Chromebook Cab	\$800.00	2217	PC Dixie Youth	\$2,500.00
2165	Phil Campbell High School - Spec Ed iPads	\$800.00	2218	Postage	\$9.54
2166	Red Bay High School Tip Off Club - Basketball Spnsr	\$250.00	2219	Russellville Fire Dept-	\$4,000.00
2167	Red Bay High School Cheer - Mats	\$1,838.00	2220	Franklin Sheriff's Office	\$5,000.00
2168	Tharptown High School - Swivl Camera System	\$800.00	2221	BHS Kindergarten Class Expenses	\$1,000.00
2169	Franklin Co Career Tech - Cosmetology Tab/Ch	\$1,000.00	2222	Franklin Co MLK 3 Scholarships	\$1,200.00
2170	Tharptown Elementary School - 4th Grade Chromebooks	\$800.00	2223	RBES 6th Grade Science Tables/Stools	\$1,500.00
2171	Franklin Co Career Tech - Ind Maint Metal/Shear	\$2,500.00	2224	City of Red Bay - Founder's Day	\$1,000.00
2172	Belgreen High School-Spec Ed Printer	\$800.00	2225	RBHS Football Helmets/Nutrition	\$4,500.00
2173	East Franklin Jr High - Door Privacy Wraps	\$1,021.00	2226	RBHS Bus Ed Materials for Dual Enrollment	\$1,500.00
2174	Russellville Fire Dept - Fire Prev Veh	\$5,000.00	2227	Liberty Learning Foundation - Super Citizen	\$7,000.00
2175	Franklin Free Press - Annual Report	\$525.00	2228	Bear Creek Dev Auth - Tablets, Depth Finder, Eq	\$2,750.00
2176	Franklin County Times - Annual Report	\$393.20	2229	VHS Music Program	\$800.00
2177	Red Bay News - Annual Report	\$300.00	2230	VHS Gym Floor Refurbish	\$1,500.00
2178	Postage	\$7.42	2231	PCHS Baseball Dirt and Conditioner	\$1,500.00
2179	RBHS Football Helmet	\$2,500.00	2232	PCHS Computer Science	\$800.00
2180	BHS Custodial Equipment	\$1,500.00	2233	THS Scholars Bowl Buzzer System	\$800.00
2181	PCES 2nd Grade Classroom Tables and Chairs	\$800.00	2234	PCES Reading Program	\$800.00
2182	THS Softball Helmets	\$1,000.00	2235	BHS Special Ed	\$800.00
2183	Red Bay Museum Railroad Caboose Restoration	\$6,000.00	2236	Franklin County Arts & Humanities Council - Repairs	\$2,500.00
2184	BHS Computer Lab Printer & Supplies	\$800.00	2237	PCHS Band Generator	\$500.00
2185	RBHS Softball Surveillance Equipment	\$2,500.00	2238	RBHS Newspapers in Education RB Times	\$1,375.00
2186	RBHS Football Nutrition Program	\$2,000.00	2239	VHS Newspapers in Education RB Times	\$625.00
2187	RPD Digital Communications Project	\$3,300.00	2240	PCHS Basketball Ice Machine/Equipment	\$825.00
2188	Red Bay Senior Center Car Show	\$250.00	2241	PCHS Lawnmower Purchase	\$5,000.00
2189	Franklin County Chamber Watermelon Fest	\$2,500.00	2242	Postage	\$11.40
2190	RBHS Golf Bags & Expenses	\$1,500.00		Transferred to Future Economic Development	\$28,000.00
2191	BHS Science Lab Classroom Whiteboard & TV	\$800.00		TOTAL OF ALL GRANTS AWARDED DURING FISCAL YEAR ENDING 9/30/2022:	\$170,829.51
2192	PCHS Cheer Signs & Vacuum	\$1,000.00		TOTAL ENDING BALANCE OF THE FCCDC AS OF 9/30/2022:	\$51,879.40
2193	RHS Softball Smart Coach Radar	\$400.00			
2194	BHS EnviroThon Team	\$250.00			
2195	Postage	\$7.95			

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The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Scholarship Committee of Franklin County is a non-profit who provides scholarships to high school seniors in Franklin County.

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'LAWSUIT,' FROM PAGE 1

the dogs' home, it will be amended to include the additional defendants named in the Beard lawsuit, according to Birmingham attorney Ryan Myers.

Those defendants include Franklin County, Franklin County Emergency Communications District, the Franklin County Animal Control Officer and Assistant, and four deputies.

Sheeks' multi-count lawsuit includes allegations of strict liability under Alabama Code Sec. 3-1-3, which holds a person legally responsible who owns or keeps a 'vicious or dangerous animal....and another person, without fault on his part, is injured by the animal,' a count of negligence and wantonness.

The plaintiff asked for a jury trial, which would not be set until at least 2024.

Additionally, Dowdy remains in the Franklin County Jail after her bond on the manslaughter cases was revoked when she was arrested for Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance.

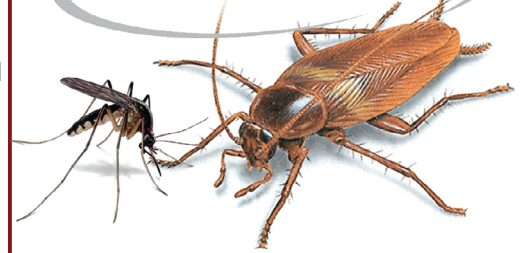
At issue in both the civil and criminal actions will be the question of whether Dowdy owned the dogs or whether the dogs were in her care or control. At the bond revocation hearing in November, Dowdy's attorney, Jessica Bugge, told Circuit Judge Brian Hamilton the dogs that attacked Beard and Sheeks were 'loose dogs' that were not owned or cared for by Dowdy.

Bugge said there were 27 dogs "murdered at one time and no evidence was presented," so it would be impossible to determine which dogs caused the fatal attacks.

"In a case like this they must have someone at fault, so that's what happened when they arrested Ms. Dowdy. There's no evidence that any dogs involved belonged to her and the home is owned by her father," Bugge said.

If convicted of the felony charges, Dowdy faces 2-20 years in prison for the manslaughter counts and 1-10 years on each Emily's Law (dangerous or vicious dog law).

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SPORTS

1.11.23

Bobcat boys look to end county tournament drought

Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press

With the Franklin County Basketball Tournament beginning Tuesday, January 10th, the Phil Campbell Bobcats boys' basketball team has been strategically planning for each opponent it may face.

"We've been discussing the tournament in practice and I think we have our work cut out for us," Phil Campbell Coach Shane Clay said.

The Belgreen Bulldogs are coming off a win in the Grind to Shine tournament hosted at Shoals Christian where the Bulldogs beat Colbert Heights.

"We've got to get past Belgreen first and they are playing really good basketball right now," Clay said.

The Bulldogs boys' varsity has won the last four years in a row at the Franklin County Tournament and eight of the past 12 years.

Quinton Hyde is an important weapon for the Bobcats' offense.

Hyde averaged 22 points per game at the King of the Smokies Tournament in Pigeon Forge, Tenn.

With their last Franklin County Tournament championship coming in 2010, the Bobcats are overdue for a championship run, and Clay is looking forward to this week's opportunity.

"It's always a fun time of year being able to play in these tournaments," Clay said.

Vina senior nets 1,000th point in win over Phillips

Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press

The Vina varsity girls basketball team played three games in one day over the Christmas break in the Waterloo Tournament.

Coach Richie Hester's team defeated Cherokee 57-27 to win the first of the tripleheader. Senior Kaitlyn Athey led the Red Devils with 24 points, including seven three-point field goals. Sara Harper added 10 points and nine assists. Kaley Attaway and KK Mitchell scored seven apiece and Khylee Brooks added five.

Later that day, Vina lost to



1000 swishes... Vina senior Kaitlyn Athey scored her thousandth point last Friday against Waterloo

Woodville 59-35. Woodville was led by Jessica Sirten's game high 25 points.

Vina's top scorer was

Athey, who had 18 in the losing effort. Harper scored six, Mitchell had four, Kenzie Elrod three and Attaway and

Brooks two apiece.

In the night-cap, Vina fell to host Waterloo 61-14. Harper again led the Red Devils with 19.

The team has an 8-6 record as it rolls into 2023. Vina traveled to Hackleburg Tuesday night, and has road games at Waterloo January 5th and Phillips on January 6th, before it begins play in the annual Franklin County Tournament next week.

Belgreen set to host county tournament

Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Varsity Basketball Tournament will begin January 10th and this year's host is Belgreen High School.

The location of the tournament is rotated alphabetically every year. This year, head Belgreen varsity girls coach Chad Green is excited the tournament is at their home gym.

"We definitely have a home court advantage. It is a fun atmosphere with bigger crowds and more fun for the kids when the gym is packed out," Green said.

Belgreen varsity boys coach Marty Cooper has been preparing his team and making sure everything is ready to go for the tournament.

"It is a busy time but I think the tournament will be a way for us to measure our progress," Cooper said. "We lost to Phil Campbell last month and we play them first in the tournament,

so we'll see how much we've improved by our performance in that game."

The tournament will begin Tuesday, January 10th, with the Red Bay Varsity Girls set to face Tharptown at 5:30 p.m. Following that game, Vina's varsity boys play Tharptown at 7:00 p.m.

On Thursday, January 12, the varsity flight continues with the Belgreen girls facing the winner of Red Bay/Tharptown at 5:30 p.m. Later that evening, the Red Bay boys will play the winner of Vina/Tharptown 7:00 p.m.

Friday the 13th will be the last round of games before the championships. The Phil Campbell varsity girls will face the Belgreen girls at 5:30p.m. The Phil Campbell varsity boys will battle Belgreen at 7 p.m.

The championship games will be held Saturday, Jan. 14 in the afternoon. The 9th grade championship begins at 1 p.m., followed by the junior varsity girls championship game between Phil Campbell and Vina at 2:30. The

See, 'TOURNAMENT,' page 12



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'TOURNAMENT,' from Page 11

boys B-varsity final will start at 4.
The varsity girls championship game tips off at 5:30p.m. with the varsity boys championship beginning at 7:00p.m.



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January 10-14 at Belgreen

2023

Girls: All Five Varsity teams
Two jvg teams: Phil Campbell and Vina

Boys: All Five Varsity teams
9th Grade: Phil Campbell, Tharptown, East Franklin, Belgreen, and Vina. B-Varsity: Phil Campbell, Red Bay, and Belgreen

Tuesday, January 10
9b #4 Belgreen vs.
#5 Vina 2:30

9b #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 East Franklin 4:00

Vg #4 Red Bay vs.
#5 Tharptown 5:30

Vb #4 Vina vs.
#5 Tharptown 7:00

Thursday, January 12
9b #1 Tharptown vs.
Belgreen/Vina Winner 4:00
Vg #1 Belgreen vs.
Red Bay/Tharptown Winner 5:30
Vb #1 Red Bay vs.
Vina/Tharptown Winner 7:00

Friday, January 13
B #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 Belgreen 4:00
Vg #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 Vina 5:30
Vv #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 Belgreen 7:00

Saturday, January 14
9b Championship Game 1:00
Jvg Championship Game #1
Phil Campbell vs. #2 Vina 2:30
B Championship Game 4:00
Vg Championship Game 5:30
Vb Championship Game 7:00

Friday, January 13
B #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 Belgreen 4:00
Vg #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 Vina 5:30
Vv #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 Belgreen 7:00

Friday, January 13
B #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 Belgreen 4:00
Vg #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 Vina 5:30
Vv #2 Phil Campbell vs.
#3 Belgreen 7:00

Saturday, January 14
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