

Lawson appeals for new trial following last week’s guilty verdict

BY PETER W. ZUBATY
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Steven Lawson was found guilty May 30 for his role in the 2015 disappearance and presumed death of Crystal Rogers, however, it didn’t end altogether when the jury recommended a 17-year sentence.

On Wednesday, attorneys Darren Wolff and Zach Buckler, who represented Lawson in the four-day trial in Bowling Green, filed a motion in Nelson Circuit Court requesting a new trial or an acquittal, claiming Lawson was denied a fair trial.

Lawson was found guilty in Warren Circuit Court — where the trial was moved in order to secure a jury pool untainted by extreme media coverage of the case — of conspiracy to murder and complicity to tampering with physical evidence.

In the motion, Lawson’s attorneys claim:

- The court did not provide proper jury instructions in accordance with Kentucky law for the charge of conspiracy to murder, leading confusion by the jury.
- The court “erred by prohibiting the Defendant from testing two hairs found in Crystal Rogers’ car in 2015.” Attorneys argued during the case that by testing the hairs, another suspect in her disappearance could have been identified through national DNA databases.
- That “proper decorum” was not observed during the trial, and that jurors were potentially influenced to rule against Lawson, noting the number of pink shirts worn by family and friends of Rogers and how that tied into the “Team Crystal” movement.
- That the defense team wasn’t provided enough time to review all the evidence in advance of the trial, and that Nelson Circuit Judge Charles Simms III did not accede to their requests to delay the trial. The evidence provided by the prosecution exceeded 400,000 pages of written documents, and hundreds and hundreds of hours of audio and video recordings.

Wolff and Buckler were brought on to the case last summer after Lawson fired his original attorney, Ted Lavit.

- That Elizabeth Chesser, a witness for the prosecution, spoke with Rogers’ mother, Sherry Ballard, during a court recess while she was under oath. They also allege that statements made during Chesser’s testimony proved prejudicial to Lawson. Chesser has a child by Lawson’s son, Joseph, who goes on trial later this month, and Chesser’s mother had been dating Steven Lawson in the past.
- That when text messages between Steven and Joseph Lawson were read and viewed during the trial, Simms did not properly instruct the jury to consider Joseph Lawson’s texts as hearsay.
- That the trial schedule was “problematic” and that “it appeared to the Defendant that there was urgency to have the trial concluded by Friday, so as to prevent the jury from having to return on Monday.” Wolff and Buckler stated in the motion that the jury, during its three-hour deliberation time, “failed to deliberate the nuances of this case.”
- That the Commonwealth, led by Special Prosecutor Shane Young, did not provide direct evidence that Steven Lawson entered into an agreement with accused murderer Brooks Houck to kill Rogers, and that it did not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Lawson participated in the conspiracy.

Because of these reasons, Wolff and Buckler claim that Lawson’s rights were denied in accordance with Section 2 of the Kentucky Constitution and the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. They are asking for a new trial for Lawson, or a judgment notwithstanding the verdict.

Brooks Houck, Rogers’ ex-boyfriend, is charged with murder and tampering with evidence, and Joseph Lawson — like his father — is charged with conspiracy to murder and complicity to tampering with physical evidence. Their trial begins June 24 in Warren Circuit Court, with Simms presiding.

POLICE

FROM PAGE C2

- Amanda M. Ixmattahua-Citlahaua, 32, homeless, was charged Wednesday with third-degree

assault (police or probation officer).

- James R. Sandefur, 52, of the 0-100 block of Dixiana Court was charged Wednesday with first-degree strangulation.

Daviess County Sheriff’s Office

- Robert A. Bates, 51, of the 1800 block of Wrights Landing Road was charged Thursday with driving under the influence.
- Phillip W. McLimore, 48, of Hartford, was charged Thursday with flagrant non-support.

ROMP

FROM PAGE C1

things is that some groups came out of our education programs and they all see the value of sharing their God-given gift of music with those most vulnerable in our community,” Lanham said.

He said, “Sarah and Parker Malone started years ago as students and now help teach the band class and have led them into nursing homes to play every other week for a year now.”

Lanham said, “Shrimp n Grits is made up of the bluegrass museum’s very own Deb Fillman and some band members are for-

mer students. Lucy (Chaney) and Emmie (Williams) are former students and River City Strings came out of The Bluegrass Band Project where they paired musicians up to form bands.”

He said, “I saw this vision years ago and now am seeing it in action. I see the potential in people to lead as teachers or band leaders and empower them to step up and take a leadership role. Sometimes people just need to be equipped, have confidence, training and a hand to get started and they take off.”

People wanting to participate in the future can email Lanham at randy@bluegrassmuseum.org.

Keith Lawrence | klawrence@messenger-inquirer.com

BBQ

FROM PAGE C1

Later in 2018, Taylor said he suffered a total organ shutdown and was on life support.

“I coded three times,” he said. “I was in a coma for six months and dropped from 360 pounds to 189. I couldn’t move. I couldn’t talk. I had to relearn everything.”

As Taylor recuperated, he said, “I started trying different sauces. Then, I got in the kitchen and started trying to make my own. It took about two years to get it right. But it was amazing.”

REAL INGREDIENTS

He said, “It has no high fructose corn syrup and it’s gluten free. It has real ingredients, not powder. It’s not too sweet. It has vinegar, heat and tomatoes.”

Taylor said, “It was hard to get in Kroger. But we’re a Kentucky Proud product and that helped.”

He said, “I did a promotion at the Middletown Kroger the day before the Derby. I grilled and handed out food. I plan to do samplings in all 50 Krogers.”

Taylor said, “My transplant team in Lexington is helping push it there and so are friends in Louisville.”

His sauce is made in large quantities by Bloemer Foods in Louisville.

Taylor’s wife, Jill, is the owner of the company.

His uncle Ronald Gossom is a partner.

“I’m the base,” Taylor said. “Jill lets me do what I want.”

He said, “I want to see it on everybody’s shelves. We’re trying to get in Publix now.”

And, Taylor said, “I want to do more competition, but I’m still disabled. It’s hard not to overdo it.”

In 2016, his barbecue team took second place in brisket in the Backyard BBQ Cookoff at Owensboro’s International Bar-B-Q Festival.

A year later, the team placed in the chicken competition.

And in 2021, it placed third in chicken and a surprising second in pork.

Taylor said he misses that.

If you’re wondering about

the name, “Big Daddy,” take a look at Taylor.

“I’m 6-foot-7,” he said. “I’ve always been tall and people called me ‘Big.’ I’ve always been taller than the other kids.”

Taylor said he played football at Daviess County High School and rugby at Western Kentucky University.

“In 1999, my senior year in high school, I was 6-foot-5 and 260 pounds,” he said.

Through all of his health scares, Taylor said he never thought he was going to die.

“I’ve always stayed positive,” he said. “I have no give-up in me. I might not be able to do something, but I’m going to try.”

Keith Lawrence | klawrence@messenger-inquirer.com

Health Care Services Directory 2025-26

Publishes in the Messenger-Inquirer on Thursday, August 7

CONTACT US TO:

- Submit your new listing
- Update your current listing
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Campbellsville man accused of burglarizing gun store

BY CHARLIE VANLEUVEN
PAXTON MEDIA GROUP

A Campbellsville man is accused of burglary after he rammed his Jeep through the front doors of Big Al’s Gun Shop in Campbellsville.

At around 8 a.m. Sunday, Nathan A. Sallee, 34, reportedly was intoxicated on drugs and drove a 2016 Jeep through the front door of the gun store on North Columbia, according to Taylor County Sheriff’s Office Chief Deputy Josh Patrick.

Patrick said Sallee got out of the vehicle and took three long guns and ammunition before driving away.

A witness who was across the street, and knows Allen “Big Al” McDonald called police, stating that the vehicle was southbound on Ky. 55.

Chief Deputy Patrick arrived and viewed surveillance footage with McDonald. The witness reportedly saw the same Jeep at a FiveStar store and notified police.

Patrick arrived at the convenience store and boxed the Jeep in. Sallee started his Jeep in an effort to get away and would

not exit the vehicle, so Patrick opened the Jeep’s door. Sallee began to resist. Patrick said he pulled him out and took him to the ground.

Patrick asked Sallee why he had burglarized the store and Sallee allegedly said he did it for notoriety.

“He stated to me that he did it to impress people and to get the attention of law enforcement,” Patrick said.

Sallee is charged with first offense operating a motor vehicle under the influence of a controlled substance with aggravating circumstance, first-degree burglary, resisting arrest and second-degree

disorderly conduct.

Patrick added that Sallee’s Jeep was involved in a number of incidents throughout the county where he drove through people’s farms and almost ran over an elderly man on a zero-turn lawnmower. He said Sallee has admitted to being involved.

Charges are pending for those other incidents.

Sallee was being held without bond in the Taylor County Detention Center.



Nathan A. Sallee

Agenda

Daviess Fiscal Court

During its meeting Thursday at the Daviess County Courthouse, Daviess Fiscal Court took the following actions:

- Approved minutes of May 22, 2025, Daviess County Fiscal Court meeting
- Approved all claims for all departments
- Approved budget transfers for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2025
- Approved salary schedule for Fiscal Year 2025/2026
- Approved order of allowance to the Board of Assessment Appeals
- Approved declaring the following as surplus inventory and transfer as follows: 2015 wheel excavator to Ricky Moore Trucking, LLC
- Approved second reading of KOC A.108 (2025) 05-2025 — Fiscal Year 2025/2026 annual budget
- Approved grant agreement between the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development and the County of Daviess, Kentucky for the GRANT Program 2025 Project — I-165 Interchange

Feasibility Study

- Approved grant agreement for Kentucky Pride Fund Recycling for Fiscal Year 2025/2026
- Approved awarding Bid No. 2425-87: Operations Center HVAC Repair & Replacement Project (Fiscal Court)
- Approved awarding Bid No. 2425-89: Bridge Deck Replacement Project (Engineering)
- Approved awarding Bid No. 2425-90: Schertzinger Building Roof Replacement (Fiscal Court)
- Approved hiring Ty Minton as heavy equipment operator effective 6/9/2025
- Approved appointing Harley Metcalf (Danny Richeson S3T) to the Owensboro-Daviess County Building Code of Appeals Board effective 6/1/2025 through 5/31/2029
- Heard first reading of KOC 1031.00 (2025) 06-2025 — An ordinance created to establish regulations and fees for medicinal cannabis businesses

Judge reverses zoning denial, orders redo

BY VICTORIA COX
EDITOR

The LaRue County Fiscal Court has been parties of multiple lawsuits for more than two years, accused of erroneously denying two industrial property rezoning requests. A ruling by the LaRue Circuit Court has determined the agency did indeed violate the applicant’s procedural due process right and has ordered the fiscal court to conduct a trial-type public hearing to reconsider the matter.

Originally brought before the fiscal court in April 2023, the lawsuits refer to the denial to rezone over 230 acres from A1, agriculture, to I2, heavy industrial. The first property, owned by TDA Properties Inc., is comprised of 118.315 acres at 3116 Tonieville Road, Hodgenville; the second, owned by Pence Leasing LLC., is comprised of 118.288 acres also along Tonieville Road.

Although the Land of Lincoln Planning and Zoning Commission recommended the rezonings be approved due to “a substantial change of an economic, social or cultural nature which justifies the zone change,” the court voted in a 4-1 decision to overturn the requests.

The vote was conducted after more than two dozen community members spoke in opposition of the rezoning; data from the Kentucky

Division of Water also was shared by Oakes Routt, showing “dense karst dominates the area posing a high risk for lessened water quality.”

A lawsuit for each property to overturn the denials began shortly after. Per advisement by former LaRue County Attorney Kyle Williamson, the fiscal court reconsidered both rezoning applications in May 2024. The pair were once again denied, with District 1 Magistrate Darin Williams citing an eight-item list as cause. Per the fiscal court minutes, Williams also referenced the Division of Water map in his motion.

TDA and Pence filed additional lawsuits to overturn the second denials. In their appeal, both parties assert that the fiscal court considered new evidence (the Division of Water map) when making its decision. Per state precedent, doing so is prohibited without first hosting a trial-type hearing and subsequently making findings of “adjudicative facts based on the evidence pre-

sented.” Otherwise, the court is required to either follow the recommendation from the Planning Commission or review the record made before the commission and make its own findings of fact from said record.

In its response to the allegation, the fiscal court argued the map reference had not been “the basis upon which the Fiscal Court ultimately voted 4-1 against the rezoning application.” Additionally, the court stated that, “[w]hile reference was made to a Kentucky Division of Water map, nowhere in the thought process (record) does it reflect its effect on the vote.”

LEGAL NOTICE

New AA LLC
with a mailing address of
3515 Frederica St., Owensboro KY 42301
hereby declares intention(s) to apply for a
Quota Retail Package, NQ Retail Malt Beverage Package License(s)
no later than
June 13, 2025
The licensed premises will be located at
3515 Frederica St., Owensboro Kentucky 42301
doing business as
Liquor World
The (owner(s); Principal Officers and Directors; Limited Partners; or Members) are as follows:
Owner, Abhigna Patel of 3155 Steeplechase, Owensboro KY 42303
Owner, Abhi Patel of 809 Walpole Dr., Gallatin TN 37066
Any person, association, corporation, or body politic may protest the granting of the license(s) by writing the Dept. of Alcoholic Beverage Control Mayo-Underwood Building 500 Mero St., 2NE33 Frankfort, Ky. 40601, within 30 days of the date of this legal publication.

LEGAL NOTICE

Windridge Country Club, Inc
with a mailing address of
5044 Millers Mill Road Suite A, Owensboro KY 42303
hereby declares intention(s) to apply for a
Limited Golf Course License(s)
no later than
June 19, 2025
The licensed premises will be located at
5044 Millers Mill Road Suite A, Owensboro Kentucky 42303
doing business as
Windridge Country Club, Inc
The (owner(s); Principal Officers and Directors; Limited Partners; or Members) are as follows:

President, Jonathan Hidenrite of 2476 Fairview Spur, Owensboro, KY 42303
Vice President, William Rogers of 4429 Springhurst LN, Owensboro, KY 42303
Secretary, Garret Carter of 2903 Waterside Way, Owensboro, KY 42303
Treasurer, Sonya Johnson of 4048 Thurston Dermont Rd, Owensboro, KY 42303
Board Member, Treva Walker of 2348 Red Oak Run, Owensboro, KY 42303
Board Member, Charlie Barr of 4549 Oakhurst Bend, Owensboro, KY 42303

Any person, association, corporation, or body politic may protest the granting of the license(s) by writing the Dept. of Alcoholic Beverage Control Mayo-Underwood Building 500 Mero St., 2NE33 Frankfort, Ky. 40601, within 30 days of the date of this legal publication.