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Dixie County deputy saves lives; Gilchrist County deputy arrests suspect

By Jeff M. Hardison © Dec. 21, 2017 at 4:37 p.m.

TRI-COUNTY AREA -- Deputies from two agencies brought to a successful close a harrowing chase and crash on Wednesday afternoon (Dec. 20), with a deputy from Dixie County saving lives and another Dixie County deputy capturing a runaway fugitive from justice, according to information from Dixie County Sheriff's Office Maj. Scott Harden and Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office Capt. Sheryl Brown.

Daniel Bell, 24, of Dixie County is in the Gilchrist County Jail on Dixie County warrants for theft and fleeing and attempting to elude police officers. Bond is set at \$100,000 for Bell, Capt. Brown said.

Dixie County Deputy Samantha Polvere saved lives after the fiery crash of the suspect vehicle in Gilchrist County, DCSO Maj. Harden said.

This incident started on Wednesday afternoon, when Dixie County deputies were on their way to a residence to serve an arrest warrant, Harden said.

The deputies saw a small extended cab pickup truck going toward them, Harden said.

As they passed the vehicle, Harden said, the DCSO deputies thought they recognized the passenger to be the individual with the warrant they had planned to serve.

When they turned around to pursue the vehicle, Harden said, the driver accelerated. The driver began to flee from the deputies.

At this point, Harden said, the deputies gave chase to the vehicle which turned east on Dixie County Road 340.

The deputies continued to pursue the vehicle which was travelling at speeds that reached 100 miles per hour at times, Harden said.

As the pursuit was nearing the intersection of CR 340 and U.S. Highway 129 in Gilchrist County, Harden said, the deputies backed off in order to give the driver time to stop at the stop-sign at this intersection.

When the suspect vehicle approached this intersection, Harden said, the driver failed to slow and continued to flee at high speeds.

It was at this time, Harden said, when the deputies again engaged in pursuit while awaiting the arrival of a Gilchrist County unit.

As they were continuing on CR 340 in Gilchrist County, a GCSO deputy approached in order to assist the Dixie County units, Harden said.

As the Gilchrist deputy approached, Harden said, the suspect driver swerved at the Gilchrist deputy and forced him off of the roadway and into the ditch just prior to reaching the intersection of CR 340 and SR 47.

During the pursuit, Harden said, the suspect driver had been driving into oncoming traffic and had been given opportunities to reduce speed -- but failed to do so.

When the suspect driver failed to stop at the intersection of CR 340 and SR 47, Harden said, and then turned into oncoming traffic on SR 47, the lead DCSO unit decided to forcibly end the pursuit by forcing the suspect vehicle off of the roadway.

When the suspect vehicle left the roadway, Harden said, it went through the road ditch and through a wire pasture fence before traveling a short distance before striking an oak tree.

When the suspect vehicle came to a stop, Bell -- the passenger with the warrants -- jumped from the vehicle and fled on foot with the deputy giving chase on foot, Harden said.

By the time the second DCSO deputy got stopped, the pickup truck had become engulfed in flames, Harden said.

It was at this point, when DCSO Deputy Polvere ran to the vehicle, Harden said, where she retrieved a shovel from the scene.

Deputy Polvere attempted to pry the door open to get the passenger out, Harden said.

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Unable to pry the door far enough, Harden said, she went into the bed of the truck, where she broke the back glass window to reach the two screaming female passengers in the back seat.

After pulling the two rear passengers through the window, the deputy reached inside the truck to the front seat where she was able to grab the unconscious driver and pull him from the vehicle, Harden said.

The driver and two rear seat passengers were transported by Gilchrist County EMS to area hospitals, while the front seat passenger – Bell – who had fled, was apprehended by a DCSO Deputy and turned over to a GCSO deputy where he was transported to and booked into the Gilchrist County Jail on the outstanding warrants.

Maj. Harden mentioned in the press release that the DCSO normally does not list the names of deputies in action, but given the heroic lifesaving action by this deputy, he did list her name.