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Trial for man charged with murdering child begins next week

By [DAVE FOPAY, Staff Writer](#) JG-TC.com | Posted: Friday, December 10, 2010 10:03 pm

CHARLESTON - The jury trial of a man accused of killing a 2-year-old boy in Charleston last year is scheduled to begin Monday.

Jamie L. Thomasson, 32, of Springfield is charged with first-degree murder and aggravated battery of a child for allegedly injuring Holden Jones, who died June 21, 2009. Holden was the son of Amy Bennett, Thomasson's girlfriend at the time, and Thomasson was caring for the boy at her Charleston residence that evening.

Jury selection is set to begin Monday and the trial is expected to take at least most of the week. The prosecution is on record that it won't seek the death penalty if Thomasson is convicted of the murder charge, but the charges against him include allegations that could mean a sentence above the normal maximum.

Jail inmates who spoke with Thomasson about Holden's death after his arrest are expected to testify during the trial, as are police officers, medical experts and others. The defense was unsuccessful in pretrial motions to try to prevent some of the inmate testimony, and a motion asking that Thomasson's own statements to police not be allowed at trial was also denied.

Defense motions before trial also included a request that Thomasson be examined for his mental fitness for trial. That motion was granted but the psychologist who examined Thomasson determined he was fit, meaning he understands the charges against him and can help with his defense.

According to police testimony at earlier hearings in the case, Thomasson said he was "playing rough" with Holden and threw him onto a mattress several times, and at one point he bounced off and hit his head. An autopsy showed extensive injuries and indications that the boy was shaken or thrown violently, according to the testimony.

The police testimony also mentioned a jail inmate who said Thomasson made derogatory statements about the boy that included use of a vulgarity that indicated Thomasson didn't think Holden was tough enough.

Thomasson has been jailed without bond since his arrest. The charges against him include allegations that the victim was younger than 12 and that the crimes were "exceptionally brutal or heinous," factors required for a prison sentence above the normal maximum.

Both charges require prison time when there's a conviction. Without the factors for extended term eligibility, first-degree murder has a sentencing range of 20 to 60 years and aggravated battery of child results in a six- to 30-year sentence.

Circuit Judge Teresa Righter is presiding in the case. State's Attorney Steve Ferguson and Assistant State's Attorney Tom Bucher are prosecuting while Springfield attorneys Monroe McWard and Mark Wykoff represent Thomasson.

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