

SUPREME COURT OF WYOMING

Metzer v. State

59 P.3d 135 (Wyo. 2002) · No. 2002 WY 176 · Decided December 10, 2002

SUMMARY

The court affirmed Jeffrey Metzer's convictions for two counts of aggravated burglary, holding that sufficient circumstantial evidence supported the jury's finding that he was the burglar. The court also held that the late disclosure of a potential suspect and related information did not deprive Metzer of a fair trial under Brady v. Maryland because the witness was made available, testified at trial, and the evidence was not material.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Wyoming
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Donnell, District Judge; Donnell; Golden; Hill; Lehman; Voigt
JURISDICTION	Wyoming
DECIDED	December 10, 2002
DOCKET	2002 WY 176
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Metzer appealed his convictions for two counts of aggravated burglary, arguing that the evidence was insufficient and that the State's late disclosure of a witness and related information violated Brady v. Maryland and deprived him of a fair trial.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For sufficiency of the evidence, whether a rational trier of fact could find the essential elements of the crime proven beyond a reasonable doubt, viewing the evidence and reasonable inferences in the light most favorable to the State and not substituting the appellate court's judgment for that of the jury. The Brady claim was reviewed under the materiality and fair-trial standard.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Wyoming Supreme Court opinion
PARTIES	Jeffrey Metzer v. State of Wyoming

TOPICS

- criminal procedure
- evidence
- appellate procedure
- due process
- burden of proof

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

criminal procedure

appellate law

evidence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether sufficient evidence supported Metzger's convictions for two counts of aggravated burglary.
2. Whether the State's failure to disclose before trial the identity and information concerning Rudy Makinen and other possible suspects violated *Brady v. Maryland* and deprived Metzger of a fair trial.

HOLDINGS

1. The evidence was sufficient for a rational jury to find beyond a reasonable doubt that Metzger committed both aggravated burglaries.
2. The State's failure to disclose Makinen's identity and related information before trial did not violate *Brady* in a manner requiring reversal because the evidence was promptly produced at trial, Makinen was made available for interview and testified, and the evidence was not material because it did not undermine confidence in the verdict.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"When reviewing a sufficiency of the evidence claim in a criminal case, we must determine whether a rational trier of fact could find the essential elements of the crime were proven beyond a reasonable doubt." (59 P.3d at 138)

"In order to establish a Brady violation, a defendant must demonstrate that the prosecution suppressed evidence, the evidence was favorable to the defendant, and the evidence was material" (59 P.3d at 139)

"We conclude that Appellant was not denied a fair trial because material exculpatory evidence was withheld." (59 P.3d at 140)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Two Rawlins residences were burglarized during daylight hours on successive days, and firearms, money, including \$2 bills, and silver coins were stolen. Four days after the first burglary, Metzger possessed 60 \$2 bills, his girlfriend passed a \$2 bill and silver dimes, and police found additional coins at her residence; Metzger also fled when told a detective wanted to speak with him. The stolen firearms were later recovered from the same reservoir, and footprint evidence was consistent with Metzger's boots. At trial, a detective disclosed that Rudy Makinen had also passed \$2 bills and had been investigated as a possible suspect; the State promptly made Makinen available, and he testified for the defense.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

After a jury trial in August 2001, Metzger was convicted on both aggravated-burglary counts and was sentenced on November 19, 2001, to concurrent terms of five to seven years. The district court denied his motion for a mistrial based on the State's failure to disclose information about Rudy Makinen before trial. The Wyoming Supreme Court affirmed the judgment and sentence in all respects.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Jennings v. State, 806 P.2d 1299, 1302 (Wyo. 1991)
- Munson v. State, 770 P.2d 1093, 1095 (Wyo. 1989)
- Bloomquist v. State, 914 P.2d 812, 824 (Wyo. 1996)
- Williams v. State, 986 P.2d 855, 857 (Wyo. 1999)
- Brady v. Maryland, 373 U.S. 83, 83 S. Ct. 1194, 10 L. Ed. 2d 215 (1963)
- Davis v. State, 2002 WY 88, ¶¶ 14, 16, 19, 47 P.3d 981
- Kyles v. Whitley, 514 U.S. 419, 435, 115 S. Ct. 1555, 1566 (1995)
- Helm v. State, 1 P.3d 635, 639 (Wyo. 2000)
- United States v. Bagley, 473 U.S. 667, 678, 105 S. Ct. 3375, 3381 (1985)
- Hensley v. State, 2002 WY 96, 48 P.3d 1099