

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Steven Ranae Gleen Candler v. J. Ball, et al.

Candler · No. 1:23-cv-00459-JLT-SAB (PC) · Decided November 6, 2025

SUMMARY

Findings and Recommendations by Magistrate Judge Stanley A. Boone addressing defendants’ motion for summary judgment in a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 excessive-force action brought by a pro se prisoner. The court recommends granting summary judgment for all defendants, concluding that the plaintiff did not identify defendants Ball or Armendariz as using force and that the medical evidence did not corroborate his allegations against the defendants.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Stanley A. Boone
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	November 6, 2025
DOCKET	1:23-cv-00459-JLT-SAB (PC)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Findings and recommendations on defendants' motion for summary judgment in a prisoner civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is appropriate when the movant shows that no genuine dispute of material fact exists and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The court may not make credibility determinations or weigh conflicting evidence and must draw reasonable inferences in favor of the nonmoving party. In an Eighth Amendment excessive-force claim, the plaintiff must show that force was applied maliciously and sadistically to cause harm rather than in a good-faith effort to maintain or restore discipline.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Nonprecedential findings and recommendations; subject to adoption or rejection by the assigned district judge.

TOPICS

- summary judgment
- prisoners rights
- cruel and unusual punishment
- section 1983
- civil rights

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether defendants were entitled to summary judgment because Plaintiff could not identify Defendants Ball or Armendariz as having used force against him.
2. Whether the evidentiary record created a genuine dispute of material fact on Plaintiff's Eighth Amendment excessive-force claim against the defendants.
3. Whether the court needed to reach defendants' alternative qualified-immunity argument after resolving the motion on the merits.

HOLDINGS

1. Summary judgment should be granted for Ball and Armendariz because Plaintiff's testimony did not identify either defendant as having used force against him or, as to Armendariz, even being present during the alleged attacks.
2. Summary judgment should be granted for defendants because the evidence did not create a genuine dispute of material fact regarding either the objective or subjective element of Plaintiff's excessive-force claim.
3. The court did not reach defendants' alternative qualified-immunity argument because summary judgment was recommended on the merits of the excessive-force claim.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“the Court shall grant summary judgment if the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.” (at 4)

“To establish a claim for the use of excessive force in violation of the Eighth Amendment, a plaintiff must establish that prison officials applied force maliciously and sadistically to cause harm, rather than in a good-faith effort to maintain or restore discipline.” (at 6)

“When opposing parties tell two different stories, one of which is blatantly contradicted by the record, so that no reasonable jury could believe it, a court should not adopt that version of the facts for purposes of ruling on a motion for summary judgment.” (at 10)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that correctional officers at Wasco State Prison repeatedly slammed his head against walls, struck him in the ribs, and kicked him in the testicles while escorting him after a dispute in a pill line. He could not identify the officers who allegedly slammed his head against the walls, except that he identified Baker as the officer who allegedly kicked him. Plaintiff testified that Ball did not assault him and did not identify Armendariz as using force or being present. Medical evaluations on the date of the incident identified no corroborating injuries other than an old scratch on Plaintiff's temple, and a recorded interview did not show injuries consistent with his allegations.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff proceeded pro se and in forma pauperis on an excessive-force claim against correctional officers J. Ball, Armendariz, and Baker. Defendants answered, discovery proceeded after an unsuccessful settlement conference, and defendants moved for summary judgment. Plaintiff filed brief notices construed as oppositions. The magistrate judge recommended granting summary judgment for all defendants and entering judgment in their favor; the recommendation was subject to objections and review by the assigned district judge.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The magistrate judge recommended that the assigned district judge grant defendants' motion for summary judgment and enter judgment in favor of all defendants. The parties could file objections within twenty-one days.

CASES CITED

- Washington Mut. Inc. v. U.S., 636 F.3d 1207, 1216 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Carmen v. San Francisco Unified Sch. Dist., 237 F.3d 1026, 1031 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Simmons v. Navajo Cnty., Ariz., 609 F.3d 1011, 1017 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Soremekun v. Thrifty Payless, Inc., 509 F.3d 978, 984 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Comite de Jornaleros de Redondo Beach v. City of Redondo Beach, 657 F.3d 936, 942 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Clement v. Gomez, 298 F.3d 898, 903 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Hudson v. McMillian, 503 U.S. 1, 6-7 (1992)
- LeMaire v. Maas, 12 F.3d 1444, 1458 (9th Cir. 1993)
- Whitley v. Albers, 475 U.S. 312, 327 (1986)
- Wilkins v. Gaddy, 559 U.S. 34, 38 (2010)
- Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386, 396 (1989)
- Simmons v. G. Arnett, 47 F.4th 927, 933 (9th Cir. 2022)
- Moran v. Selig, 447 F.3d 748, 760 n.16 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Matsushita Elec. Indus. Co., Ltd. v. Zenith Radio Corp., 475 U.S. 574, 586 (1986)
- Santos v. Gates, 287 F.3d 846, 853 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Scott v. Harris, 550 U.S. 372, 380 (2007)
- White v. Roper, 901 F.2d 1501, 1507 (9th Cir. 1990)
- Wilkerson v. Wheeler, 772 F.3d 834, 838-39 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Baxter v. Sullivan, 923 F.2d 1391, 1394 (9th Cir. 1991)

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