

OHIO COURT OF APPEALS, FIFTH APPELLATE DISTRICT, DELAWARE
COUNTY

State of Ohio v. Rico Williams

2025-Ohio-5309 · No. 25 CAA 01 0009 · Decided November 24, 2025

SUMMARY

The Ohio Fifth District Court of Appeals affirmed Rico Williams's convictions, including possession of a fentanyl-related compound. The court held that the evidence, including Williams's recorded admission and laboratory identification of fentanyl, was legally sufficient and that the conviction was not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Ohio Court of Appeals, Fifth Appellate District, Delaware County
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Craig R. Baldwin, P.J.; William B. Hoffman, J.; Robert G. Montgomery, J.
JURISDICTION	Ohio Fifth District Court of Appeals
DECIDED	November 24, 2025
DOCKET	25 CAA 01 0009
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Rico Williams appealed his jury convictions, challenging the sufficiency and manifest weight of the evidence supporting Count One, possession of a fentanyl-related compound.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For sufficiency, the court viewed the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution and asked whether any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements proven beyond a reasonable doubt. For manifest weight, the court reviewed the entire record, weighed the evidence and reasonable inferences, considered witness credibility, and determined whether the jury clearly lost its way and created a manifest miscarriage of justice. The court applied the ordinary presumption in favor of the judgment and verdict.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published precedential opinion
PARTIES	Rico Williams v. State of Ohio

TOPICS

criminal procedure

evidence

standard of review

appellate procedure

statutory interpretation

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

criminal procedure

appellate practice

evidence

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the evidence was legally sufficient to prove that Williams knowingly possessed a fentanyl-related compound in violation of R.C. 2925.11(A) and (C)(11)(d).
2. Whether Williams's conviction for possession of a fentanyl-related compound was against the manifest weight of the evidence.
3. Whether R.C. 2925.11(C)(9)(a) precluded a fentanyl-related-compound conviction because the tested sample was not tested for marijuana.

HOLDINGS

1. The evidence was legally sufficient to support Williams's conviction because his recorded admission established knowing possession and identified one of the drugs as fentanyl, while laboratory testing confirmed the presence of a fentanyl compound.
2. R.C. 2925.11(C)(9)(a) did not preclude Williams's conviction because subsection (C)(9)(b) applies when the offender knows or has reason to know that the substance contains a fentanyl-related compound, and Williams admitted that one of the baggies contained fentanyl.
3. The conviction was not against the manifest weight of the evidence because the jury did not clearly lose its way or create a manifest miscarriage of justice.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The test for sufficiency of the evidence is “whether, after viewing the evidence in a light most favorable to the prosecution, any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements of the crime proven beyond a reasonable doubt.”” (¶ 9)

“Accordingly, R.C. 2925.11(C)(9)(a) does not apply.” (¶ 15)

“Nor can we say that the jury clearly lost its way and created such a manifest miscarriage of justice that the conviction must be reversed and a new trial ordered.” (¶ 16)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

During a traffic stop, Ohio State Highway Patrol Sergeant James King arrested Williams on an outstanding warrant and searched him incident to the arrest, finding a digital scale with white powder residue. The passenger provided King with loaded firearms and baggies containing suspected drugs, and Williams subsequently received Miranda warnings and admitted that the drugs and guns were his and that one baggie contained fentanyl. Laboratory testing identified methamphetamine, cocaine, and a fentanyl compound; Williams had also previously been convicted of felony drug possession.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Williams was indicted in the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas on five felony counts, including possession of a fentanyl-related compound. After a jury trial, the jury found him guilty on all counts and the related firearm specifications. The trial court denied Williams's Crim.R. 29(A) motion for acquittal, and Williams timely appealed. The Fifth District Court of Appeals affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- State v. Worley, 2021-Ohio-2207
- State v. Jenks, 61 Ohio St.3d 259, 574 N.E.2d 492 (1991)
- State v. Smith, 80 Ohio St.3d 89, 102, 684 N.E.2d 668 (1997)
- Jackson v. Virginia, 443 U.S. 307, 99 S.Ct. 2781, 61 L.Ed.2d 560 (1979)
- State v. Lang, 129 Ohio St.3d 512, 2011-Ohio-4215, 954 N.E.2d 596, ¶ 219
- State v. Thompkins, 78 Ohio St.3d 380, 386-387 (1997)
- State v. Smith, 1997-Ohio-355
- Tibbs v. Florida, 457 U.S. 31, 42, 102 S.Ct. 2218, 72 L.Ed.2d 652 (1982)
- State v. Martin, 20 Ohio App.3d 172, 175, 485 N.E.2d 717 (1983)
- Seasons Coal Co., Inc. v. Cleveland, 10 Ohio St.3d 77, 80 (1984)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

[Cite as State v. Williams, 2025-Ohio-5309.] COURT OF APPEALS DELAWARE COUNTY, OHIO FIFTH APPELLATE DISTRICT STATE OF OHIO, Case No. 25 CAA 01 0009 Plaintiff - Appellee Opinion And Judgment Entry -vs- Appeal from the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas, Case No. 23 CRI 06 0308 RICO WILLIAMS, Judgment: Affirmed Defendant - Appellant Date of Judgment Entry: November 24, 2025 BEFORE: Craig R. Baldwin; William B. Hoffman; Robert G. Montgomery, Judges APPEARANCES: MELISSA A. SCHIFFEL, Prosecuting Attorney, KATHERYN L. MUNGER, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, for Plaintiff-Appellee; APRIL F. CAMPBELL, for Defendant-Appellant.

Baldwin, P.J. {¶1} The appellant, Rico Williams, appeals the jury's verdict finding him guilty of Possession of a Fentanyl-Related Compound. Appellee is the State of Ohio. For the reasons set forth below we affirm the decision of the trial court. STATEMENT OF FACTS AND THE CASE {¶2} On or about February 22, 2023, Ohio State Highway Patrol Sergeant James King observed a vehicle traveling northbound on Interstate 71 in Delaware County, Ohio. The appellant was subsequently identified as the operator of the vehicle.

Sergeant King noted that the vehicle was making excessive noise, and initiated a traffic stop due to the vehicle's loud exhaust. Upon making contact with the vehicle, Sergeant King observed the appellant in the driver's seat and a female later identified as S.S. in the front passenger seat.

The appellant provided his identification card, after which Sergeant King discovered that the appellant had a suspended license and a pending warrant. Upon the arrival of backup, Sergeant King initiated an arrest of the appellant based upon the outstanding warrant. A search incident to said arrest revealed a digital scale with white powder residue inside the appellant's jeans pocket.

Sergeant King then made contact with S.S., who informed him that there were two firearms in the car. S.S. provided those loaded weapons to Sergeant King upon request. S.S. also gave Sergeant King three small plastic baggies containing suspected drugs. S.S. denied ownership of both the guns and the suspected drugs. {¶3} Sergeant King returned to the appellant and read him his Miranda rights, at which time the appellant admitted he had handed the drugs and guns to S.S. when they were being pulled over.

In addition, the appellant stated the drugs were "Meth, Crack, and Fentanyl." The appellant even provided information regarding what he had paid for the drugs. The appellant's admissions were captured on the rear dash camera of Sergeant King's patrol car. {¶4} Sergeant King subsequently test-fired both firearms and found them to be operable.

In addition, the suspected drugs were sent for laboratory testing. The test results confirmed the presence of Methamphetamine in the amount of approximately 6.6809 grams; Cocaine in the amount of approximately 1.1842 grams; and, Fentanyl compound in the amount of 13.6475 grams. Further, a search of the appellant's record revealed a prior conviction for felony drug possession. {¶5} The appellant was indicted by the Delaware County Grand Jury on June 8, 2023, on the following: • Count One: Possession of a Fentanyl-Related Compound in violation of R.C.

2925.11(A) and 2925.11(C)(11)(d), a felony of the second degree, with a one year firearm specification pursuant to R.C. 2941.141(A); • Count Two: Aggravated Possession of Drugs in violation of R.C. 2925.11(A) and 2925.11(C)(1)(b), a felony of the third degree, with a one year firearm specification pursuant to R.C. 2941.141(A); • Count Three: Possession of Cocaine in violation of R.C.

2925.11(A) and 2925.11(C)(4)(a), a felony of the fifth degree, with a one year firearm specification pursuant to R.C. 2941.141(A); • Count Four: Having Weapons While Under Disability in violation of R.C. 2923.13(A)(3) and 2923.13(B), a felony of the third degree; and, • Count Five: Having Weapons While Under Disability in violation of R.C. 2923.13(A)(3) and 2923.13(B), a felony of the third degree.

The appellant pleaded not guilty at his August 16, 2024, arraignment, and the matter proceeded to a jury trial on November 26, 2024. The appellee presented its case and rested, and the appellant

moved for acquittal pursuant to Crim.R. 29(A), which the court denied.

The jury found the appellant guilty on all five counts, with further findings as to the firearm specifications contained in Counts One, Two, and Three, and the amount of drugs in Counts One and Two. {¶6} The appellant filed a timely appeal in which he sets forth the following two assignments of error: {¶7} “I. THE STATE’S EVIDENCE THAT WILLIAMS POSSESSED A FENTANYL-RELATED COMPOUND AS TO COUNT ONE, WAS LEGALLY INSUFFICIENT AS A MATTER OF LAW.” {¶8} “II.

THE EVIDENCE ALSO WEIGHED MANIFESTLY AGAINST CONVICTING WILLIAMS OF POSSESSING A FENTANYL-RELATED COMPOUND.” STANDARD OF REVIEW {¶9} The appellant challenges his conviction on Count One, Possession of a Fentanyl-Related Compound, on both sufficiency of the evidence and manifest weight grounds. Sufficiency of the evidence was addressed by the Ohio Supreme Court in *State v. Worley*, 2021-Ohio-2207, as follows: The test for sufficiency of the evidence is “whether, after viewing the evidence in a light most favorable to the prosecution, any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements of the crime proven beyond a reasonable doubt.” *State v. Jenks*, 61 Ohio St.3d 259, 574 N.E.2d 492 (1991), paragraph two of the syllabus, superseded by constitutional amendment on other grounds as stated in *State v. Smith*, 80 Ohio St.3d 89, 102, 684 N.E.2d 668 (1997), fn.

4, and following *Jackson v. Virginia*, 443 U.S. 307, 99 S.Ct. 2781, 61 L.Ed.2d 560 (1979). “ ‘Proof beyond a reasonable doubt’ is proof of such character that an ordinary person would be willing to rely and act upon it in the most important of the person's own affairs.” R.C. 2901.05(E). A sufficiency-of-the-evidence challenge asks whether the evidence adduced at trial “is legally sufficient to support the jury verdict as a matter of law.” *State v. Lang*, 129 Ohio St.3d 512, 2011-Ohio- 4215, 954 N.E.2d 596, ¶ 219.

Id. at ¶57. Thus, a review of the constitutional sufficiency of evidence to support a criminal conviction requires a court of appeals to determine whether, after viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution, any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt. {¶10} Manifest weight of the evidence, on the other hand, addresses the evidence's effect of inducing belief.

State v. Thompkins, 78 Ohio St.3d 380, 386–387 (1997), superseded by constitutional amendment on other grounds as stated by *State v. Smith*, 1997–Ohio–355. The *Thompkins* Court stated:... Weight of the evidence concerns “the inclination of the greater amount of credible evidence, offered in a trial, to support one side of the issue rather than the other. It indicates clearly to the jury that the party having the burden of proof will be entitled to their verdict, if, on weighing the evidence in their minds, they shall find the greater amount of credible evidence sustains the issue which is to be established before them.

Weight is not a question of mathematics, but depends on its effect in inducing belief.” (Emphasis added.) Black's, *supra*, at 1594. *Id.* at 387. The Court stated further: When a court of appeals reverses a judgment of a trial court on the basis that the verdict is against the weight of the evidence, the appellate court sits as a “ ‘thirteenth juror’ ” and disagrees with the factfinder's resolution of the conflicting testimony.

Tibbs, 457 U.S. at 42, 102 S.Ct. at 2218, 72 L.Ed.2d at 661. See, also, *State v. Martin* (1983), 20 Ohio App.3d 172, 175, 20 OBR 215, 219, 485 N.E.2d 717, 720–721 (“The court, reviewing the entire record, weighs the evidence and all reasonable inferences, considers the credibility of witnesses and determines whether in resolving conflicts in the evidence, the jury clearly lost its way and created such a manifest miscarriage of justice that the conviction must be reversed and a new trial ordered.

The discretionary power to grant a new trial should be exercised only in the exceptional case in which the evidence weighs heavily against the conviction.”). *Id.* The Court in *Seasons Coal Co., Inc. v. Cleveland*, 10 Ohio St.3d 77 (1984), stated further: “[I]n determining whether the judgment below is manifestly against the weight of the evidence, every reasonable intendment and every reasonable presumption must be made in favor of the judgment and the finding of facts. * * * “If the evidence is susceptible of more than one construction, the reviewing court is bound to give it that interpretation which is consistent with the verdict and judgment, most favorable to sustaining the verdict and judgment.” *Id.* at 80, fn.

3, quoting 5 Ohio Jurisprudence 3d, Appellate Review, Section 60, at 191– 192 (1978). ANALYSIS {¶11} Although sufficiency of the evidence and manifest weight entail different legal concepts, both entail a review of the record, and as such we shall address the appellant's assignments of error together. {¶12} The appellant argues that his conviction on Count One, Possession of a Fentanyl--Related Compound, was based upon insufficient evidence and was against the manifest weight of the evidence.

R.C. 2925.11(A) defines drug possession offenses, and states that “[n]o person shall knowingly obtain, possess, or use a controlled substance or a controlled substance analog.” R.C. 2925.11(C) (9) provides further: (C) Whoever violates division (A) of this section is guilty of one of the following: * * * (9) If the drug involved in the violation is a compound, mixture, preparation, or substance that is a combination of a fentanyl-related compound and marihuana, one of the following applies: (a) Except as otherwise provided in division (C)(9)(b) of this section, the offender is guilty of possession of marihuana and shall be punished as provided in division (C)(3) of this section.

Except as otherwise provided in division (C)(9)(b) of this section, the offender is not guilty of possession of a fentanyl-related compound under division (C)(11) of this section and shall not be charged with, convicted of, or punished under division (C)(11) of this section for possession of a

fentanyl-related compound. (b) If the offender knows or has reason to know that the compound, mixture, preparation, or substance that is the drug involved contains a fentanyl-related compound, the offender is guilty of possession of a fentanyl-related compound and shall be punished under division (C)(11) of this section. {¶13} The appellant argues that R.C.

2925.11(C)(9)(a) applies, that there was insufficient evidence to establish that the sample tested by the Ohio State Highway Patrol criminalist did not contain marijuana, and that as a result his conviction on Count One, Possession of a Fentanyl-Related Compound, must be reversed. This argument is wholly without merit.

The appellant admitted to Sergeant King that the drugs (as well as the guns) were his, and that one of the baggies of drugs contained fentanyl. The appellant's admission was recorded by the rear dash camera in Sergeant King's patrol car. King testified at trial, and the rear dash camera footage was played for the jury. {¶14} Each element of Count One, Possession of a Fentanyl-Related Compound, was established during trial.

First, Sergeant King identified the appellant as the individual King pulled over and the individual who admitted to possessing the drugs. Second, the appellant admitted to Sergeant King to knowingly possessing fentanyl.

The jury heard this admission when it viewed the rear dashcam footage from Sergeant King's patrol car. Third, the fentanyl was positively identified by Ohio State Highway Patrol Drug Chemistry Section criminalist Ashley Humphrey, who testified at trial regarding her testing protocol in general, and the results of her tests in this case in particular. {¶15} The appellant submits that Ms. Humphrey's testimony is insufficient and against the manifest weight of the evidence because she did not test the sample for the presence of marijuana and, as a result, R.C.

2925.11(C)(9)(a) applies to render the appellant not guilty of possession of a fentanyl-related compound. However, R.C. 2925.11(C)(9)(a) specifically qualifies its application with the language "[e]xcept as otherwise provided in division (C)(9)(b) of this section." Division (C)(9)(b) states that "[i]f the offender knows or has reason to know that the compound, mixture, preparation, or substance that is the drug involved contains a fentanyl-related compound, the offender is guilty of possession of a fentanyl-related compound." The appellant specifically told Sergeant King that one of the baggies of drugs contained fentanyl, and this admission was captured on video which was played for the jury – evidencing the fact that the appellant knew that the drug involved was a fentanyl-related compound.

Accordingly, R.C. 2925.11(C)(9)(a) does not apply. {¶16} The jury heard the testimony of the witnesses and viewed all the evidence, deliberated, and found the appellant guilty of, inter alia, Possession of a Fentanyl-Related Compound.

We cannot say, after viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution, that no rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements of said crime beyond a reasonable doubt. Nor can we say that the jury clearly lost its way and created such a manifest miscarriage of justice that the conviction must be reversed and a new trial ordered.

The appellant's assignments of error numbers one and two are, therefore, without merit. CONCLUSION {¶17} Based upon the foregoing, we find that the appellant's conviction on Count One, Possession of a Fentanyl-Related Compound, was supported by sufficient evidence, and was not against the manifest weight of the evidence.

Accordingly, the appellant's assignments of error numbers one and two are overruled, and the judgment of the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas is hereby affirmed. {¶18} Costs to appellant. By: Baldwin, P.J. Hoffman, J. and Montgomery, J. concur.