

SUPERIOR COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Commonwealth v. Robinson, Rasheed

2025 Pa. Super. 261 (Superior Court of Pennsylvania 2025) · No. 276 EDA 2025 · Decided November 17, 2025

SUMMARY

The Pennsylvania Superior Court affirmed Rasheed Robinson’s judgment of sentence for first-degree murder and related firearms offenses arising from the killing of Deja Monae Lewis. The court held that evidence concerning Robinson’s alleged prior killing of Bennet Drake was properly admitted under Pennsylvania Rule of Evidence 404(b) to show motive and provide context. It also rejected Robinson’s challenges to the sufficiency and weight of the circumstantial evidence.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Superior Court of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Panella, P.J.E.; Dubow, J.; Nichols, J.
JURISDICTION	Pennsylvania Superior Court
DECIDED	November 17, 2025
DOCKET	276 EDA 2025
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Robinson appealed from the judgment of sentence entered after a jury convicted him of first-degree murder, firearms offenses, and possession of an instrument of crime.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Admissibility or exclusion of evidence is reviewed for abuse of discretion. Sufficiency of the evidence is reviewed by considering all admitted evidence in the light most favorable to the verdict winner and determining whether the evidence permits the fact-finder to find every element beyond a reasonable doubt. A weight-of-the-evidence claim is reviewed for abuse of the trial court's discretion, not for whether the verdict was against the weight of the evidence.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published and precedential
PARTIES	Rasheed Robinson v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

TOPICS

- criminal procedure
- evidence
- appellate procedure
- standard of review
- preservation of error

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

criminal procedure

evidence

appellate practice

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the trial court abused its discretion by admitting evidence of Robinson's prior killing of Bennet Drake under Pennsylvania Rule of Evidence 404(b).
2. Whether the evidence was sufficient to support Robinson's convictions when there was no eyewitness or forensic evidence directly placing him at Lewis's apartment.
3. Whether the verdict was against the weight of the evidence.
4. Whether the circumstantial evidence was sufficient to establish guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

HOLDINGS

1. The trial court did not abuse its discretion by admitting evidence that Robinson shot and killed Drake because the evidence was relevant to show motive and provide the complete story and context of the charged crimes, and the limiting instructions ameliorated any prejudice.
2. Robinson waived his sufficiency challenge by failing to identify the offense or specific element allegedly unsupported by the evidence. Even absent waiver, the circumstantial evidence was sufficient for the jury to infer that Robinson was the perpetrator.
3. The trial court did not abuse its discretion in denying Robinson's motion for a new trial based on the weight of the evidence.
4. A conviction may be sustained wholly on circumstantial evidence, and Robinson's separately presented circumstantial-evidence argument was waived for inadequate briefing and was also meritless.

KEY QUOTATIONS

““Unfair prejudice means a tendency to suggest decision on an improper basis or to divert the jury’s attention away from its duty of weighing the evidence impartially.”” (at 5)

“The Commonwealth may sustain its burden of proving every element of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt by means of wholly circumstantial evidence.” (at 7-8)

“An appellate court’s standard of review when presented with a weight of the evidence claim is distinct from the standard of review applied by the trial court.” (at 9)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Robinson had previously shot and killed Bennet Drake, the stepfather of Deja Monae Lewis, and was wanted for that killing. Before Lewis's death, Robinson texted that Lewis was a "rat" and wanted her to change her account of Drake's murder. Shortly before Lewis was killed, Robinson made numerous calls to her, cellular data placed him near her apartment, and there was evidence that Lewis knew her killer. Lewis was found shot in her apartment, and cartridge casings from the scene matched a semiautomatic pistol recovered near the location where Robinson was apprehended.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County admitted evidence of Robinson's involvement in the killing of Bennet Drake under Pennsylvania Rule of Evidence 404(b), convicted Robinson of all charged offenses, and imposed a mandatory life sentence. The trial court denied Robinson's post-sentence motion challenging, among other things, the weight of the evidence. Robinson timely appealed, and the Superior Court affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Commonwealth v. Nabried, 327 A.3d 315, 321 (Pa. Super. 2024)
- Commonwealth v. Grzegorzewski, 945 A.2d 237, 239 (Pa. Super. 2008)
- Commonwealth v. Carter, 320 A.3d 140, 148 (Pa. Super. 2024)
- Commonwealth v. Dillon, 925 A.2d 131, 141 (Pa. 2007)
- Commonwealth v. Conte, 198 A.3d 1169, 1180-81 (Pa. Super. 2018)
- Commonwealth v. Tedford, 960 A.2d 1, 37 (Pa. 2008)
- Commonwealth v. Hairston, 84 A.3d 657, 666 (Pa. 2014)
- Commonwealth v. Anderson, 327 A.3d 273, 285 (Pa. Super. 2024)
- Commonwealth v. Devine, 26 A.3d 1139, 1145 (Pa. Super. 2011)
- Commonwealth v. LeClair, 236 A.3d 71, 76 (Pa. Super. 2020)
- Commonwealth v. Arias, 286 A.3d 341, 352 (Pa. Super. 2022)
- Commonwealth v. Talbert, 129 A.3d 536, 545 (Pa. Super. 2015)
- Commonwealth v. Wright, 314 A.3d 515, 523 (Pa. Super. 2024)