

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Kristin Watson v. Commissioner of Social Security

Watson · No. 1:21-cv-01717-ADA-HBK · Decided March 7, 2023

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California adopted the magistrate judge’s findings and recommendations in a Social Security appeal. The court denied Kristin Watson’s motion for summary judgment, granted the Commissioner’s cross-motion, affirmed the Commissioner’s decision, and directed the Clerk to close the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	March 7, 2023
DOCKET	1:21-cv-01717-ADA-HBK
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought judicial review of a final decision of the Commissioner of Social Security. After a magistrate judge recommended denying Plaintiff's motion for summary judgment, granting Defendant's cross-motion for summary judgment, and affirming the Commissioner's decision, the district court conducted de novo review of Plaintiff's timely objections and adopted the findings and recommendations.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C); review of the Commissioner's decision for proper evaluation of the administrative record.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court order with no reporter citation

TOPICS

- judicial review of agency action
- summary judgment
- administrative law
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated Plaintiff's subjective complaints and testimony concerning the severity of her symptoms.
2. Whether the Commissioner's decision should be affirmed after de novo review of the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations.

HOLDINGS

1. Plaintiff did not have to corroborate her alleged pain with objective medical findings, but she was required to demonstrate that the impairment was medically ascertained.
2. The ALJ properly evaluated Plaintiff's subjective complaints and did not improperly discredit her testimony.
3. The findings and recommendations were supported by the record and proper analysis and were adopted in full; Plaintiff's motion for summary judgment was denied, Defendant's motion was granted, and the Commissioner's decision was affirmed.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"In Bunnell, the court held that pain need not be corroborated by objective medical findings, but some impairment must be medically ascertained." (at 2)

"The Court finds that Plaintiff did not have to corroborate her alleged pain with objective medical findings, but Plaintiff must also demonstrate that the impairment is medically ascertained." (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Watson alleged disabling symptoms, including pain and functional limitations, in connection with her claim for Social Security benefits. The administrative law judge considered Watson's testimony, objective medical records, and findings from numerous medical professionals. The district court concluded that the ALJ considered evidence favorable to Watson and did not improperly discredit her testimony.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Kristin Watson initiated an action seeking review of the Commissioner's final decision. The matter was referred to a magistrate judge, who issued findings and recommendations on January 9, 2023. Plaintiff objected, largely reiterating her prior arguments concerning the evaluation of her subjective complaints. The district court reviewed the record de novo, adopted the findings and recommendations in full, denied Plaintiff's motion for summary judgment, granted Defendant's motion, affirmed the Commissioner's decision, and closed the case.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Bunnell v. Sullivan, 947 F.2d 341, 347-48 (9th Cir. 1991)

OPINION

(SS) Watson v. Commissioner of Social Security

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 KRISTIN WATSON, Case No. 1:21-cv-01717-ADA-HBK 12 Plaintiff, ORDER
ADOPTING FINDINGS AND

RECOMMENDATIONS, DENYING

13 v. PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR SUMMARY

JUDGMENT, GRANTING DEFENDANT'S

14 COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL CROSS-MOTION FOR SUMMARY

SECURITY, JUDGMENT, AND AFFIRMING THE

15 DECISION OF THE COMMISSIONER OF

Defendant. SOCIAL SECURITY 16 (ECF Nos. 17, 18, 20) 17 18 Plaintiff Kristin Watson
("Plaintiff") initiated this action seeking judicial review of a final 19 decision of the Commissioner
of Social Security. (ECF No. 1). This matter was referred to a 20 United States Magistrate Judge
pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B) and Local Rule 302(c)(15). 21 (E.D. Cal. 2022). 22 On
January 9, 2023, the assigned Magistrate Judge issued findings and recommendations 23
recommending that Plaintiff's motion for summary judgment be denied, Defendant's cross-motion
24 for summary judgment be granted, the Commissioner's decision be affirmed. (ECF No. 20).
The 25 findings and recommendations contained a notice that any objections were due within
fourteen 26 days. (Id. at 1, 12). On January 23, 2023, Plaintiff timely filed objections to the
findings and 27 recommendations that largely reiterate the arguments made in her opening brief.
(ECF No. 21). 28 /// 1 In accordance with the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636 (b)(1)(C), the Court
has conducted a 2 de novo review of this case. Having carefully reviewed the entire file, including
Plaintiff's 3 objections, the Court concludes that the Magistrate Judge's findings and
recommendations are 4 supported by the record and proper analysis. 5 In her objections, Plaintiff
argues that the Court should reject the Magistrate Judge's finding 6 that the ALJ properly
evaluated Plaintiff's subjective complaints. (See ECF No. 21.) Plaintiff 7 reiterates her arguments
made in her motion for summary judgment that the ALJ may not discredit 8 Plaintiff's testimony
as to the severity of symptoms merely because they are unsupported by 9 objective medical
evidence, citing to Bunnell v. Sullivan, 947 F.2d 341, 347-48 (9th Cir. 1991). 10 (Id. at 2.) Plaintiff
further contends that the ALJ failed to support the assumption that the 11 description of her
symptoms as "moderately severe" is inconsistent with Plaintiff's alleged degree 12 of functional

limitations caused by those symptoms. (Id. at 3.) In Bunnell, the court held that pain need not be corroborated by objective medical findings, but some impairment must be medically ascertained. Bunnell, 947 F.2d at 347-48. The Court finds that Plaintiff did not have to corroborate her alleged pain with objective medical findings, but Plaintiff must also demonstrate that the impairment is medically ascertained. Thus, the Court adopts the Magistrate Judge's findings and recommendations, which conclude that the ALJ explicitly recognized evidence in the record that could be considered more favorable to Plaintiff, including her own testimony and objective medical records. Upon review of the administrative record, the Court finds that the ALJ indeed considered Plaintiff's testimony and did not discredit it. (ECF No. 11-1 at 22, 26.) As explained in detail, the ALJ considered numerous medical professionals' findings with respect to Plaintiff conditions. (See ECF No. 20 at 8-9.) Therefore, the Court adopts the Magistrate Judge's findings and recommendations in full.

1 ACCORDINGLY,

2 1. The findings and recommendations issued on January 9, 2023, (ECF No. 20), are adopted in full;
3 2. Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment, (ECF No. 17), is DENIED;
4 3. Defendant's Motion for Summary Judgment, (ECF No. 18), is GRANTED and the decision of the Commissioner of Social Security is AFFIRMED; and
5 4. The Clerk shall enter judgment in favor of Defendant, terminate any deadlines, and close this case.
6 7 8 9 10 11 | TPIS SO ORDERED. 12
Dated: _ March 7, 2023

3 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28