

COURT OF APPEALS OF OHIO, EIGHTH APPELLATE DISTRICT,
CUYAHOGA COUNTY

State v. Rachells

2026-Ohio-1194 · No. 115358 · Decided April 2, 2026

SUMMARY

The Ohio Eighth District Court of Appeals affirmed Marvin Rachells’s convictions for aggravated murder and related offenses arising from the shooting death of Lisa Brownlee. The court held that the evidence was sufficient and not against the manifest weight of the evidence, that the trial court did not abuse its discretion in admitting late-disclosed cell-phone mapping evidence, and that Rachells failed to establish ineffective assistance of counsel.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals of Ohio, Eighth Appellate District, Cuyahoga County
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Emanuella D. Groves; Eileen T. Gallagher; Deena R. Calabrese
JURISDICTION	Ohio Court of Appeals, Eighth Appellate District, Cuyahoga County
DECIDED	April 2, 2026
DOCKET	115358
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Criminal appeal from convictions for aggravated murder, murder, and felonious assault, including firearm specifications and forfeiture specifications.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Sufficiency of the evidence is reviewed by determining whether, viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution, any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Manifest-weight claims require review of the entire record, reasonable inferences, and witness credibility to determine whether the factfinder clearly lost its way and created a manifest miscarriage of justice. Discovery-sanction decisions are reviewed for abuse of discretion. Ineffective-assistance claims are governed by the deficient-performance and prejudice requirements of Strickland v. Washington.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published and precedential Ohio appellate opinion

PARTIES

Marvin Rachells v. State of Ohio

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether sufficient evidence supported Rachells's convictions, particularly the identification of Rachells as the perpetrator.
2. Whether the jury clearly lost its way and rendered a verdict against the manifest weight of the evidence.
3. Whether the trial court abused its discretion by admitting demonstrative cell-phone mapping evidence after a discovery violation under Crim.R. 16.
4. Whether trial counsel rendered ineffective assistance by failing to request a continuance after learning of the late-disclosed evidence.

HOLDINGS

1. The convictions were supported by sufficient evidence because, viewed in the light most favorable to the State, the evidence permitted a rational trier of fact to find Rachells's identity and the elements of the offenses proven beyond a reasonable doubt.
2. The convictions were not against the manifest weight of the evidence because the jury did not clearly lose its way and the case did not present an extraordinary circumstance requiring reversal.
3. The trial court did not abuse its discretion by admitting the late-disclosed cell-phone mapping evidence rather than excluding it or imposing another sanction.
4. Rachells failed to establish ineffective assistance because he did not demonstrate prejudice from counsel's failure to request a continuance.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Circumstantial and direct evidence hold the same weight and any differences between the two are irrelevant to the probative value of evidence."

"There was overwhelming evidence linking Rachells to this crime, such that he was not prejudiced by the introduction of the cell phone mapping data."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Lisa Brownlee was shot and killed in a Cleveland park on May 6, 2024. Surveillance and license-plate-camera evidence connected the shooter's vehicle to Rachells, and Rachells identified both the vehicle and himself in a still image from a store. Police recovered the alleged murder weapon, a Glock 19, from a safe in Rachells's

residence; ballistic evidence linked it to the shell casings and bullets from the crime, and DNA from the firearm was predominantly Rachells's. Cell-phone mapping data also placed Rachells's phone near the homicide, although some underlying data and a corresponding demonstrative exhibit were disclosed late during trial.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A Cuyahoga County grand jury indicted Rachells in connection with the shooting death of Lisa Brownlee. After a jury trial, the jury found him guilty on all counts. The trial court merged the counts for sentencing, proceeded on aggravated murder, and imposed life imprisonment without parole plus consecutive firearm-specification terms. Rachells appealed, challenging the sufficiency and manifest weight of the evidence, admission of late-disclosed cell-phone mapping evidence, and the effectiveness of trial counsel.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The case was remanded to the trial court for execution of sentence. The special mandate was directed to issue, and bail pending appeal was terminated.

CASES CITED

- State v. Thompkins, 78 Ohio St.3d 380, 387 (1997)
- State v. Jenks, 61 Ohio St.3d 259, 273 (1991)
- Jackson v. Virginia, 443 U.S. 307, 319 (1979)
- State v. Harris, 2021-Ohio-856, ¶¶ 21, 32 (8th Dist.)
- State v. Wilson, 2007-Ohio-2202, ¶ 25
- State v. Martin, 20 Ohio App.3d 172 (1st Dist. 1983)
- State v. Rodano, 2017-Ohio-1034, ¶ 36 (8th Dist.)
- State v. Cassano, 2012-Ohio-4047, ¶ 13 (8th Dist.)
- State v. Treesh, 90 Ohio St.3d 460, 485 (2001)
- State v. Hawthorne, 2011-Ohio-6078, ¶ 9
- Michalic v. Cleveland Tankers, Inc., 364 U.S. 325, 330 (1960)
- State v. Collins, 2020-Ohio-4136, ¶ 18 (8th Dist.)
- State v. Smiler, 2014-Ohio-1628, ¶ 13 (8th Dist.)
- State v. Wiles, 59 Ohio St.3d 71, 78 (1991)
- State v. Darmond, 2013-Ohio-966, ¶ 35
- State v. Parson, 6 Ohio St.3d 442 (1983)
- Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 687-688 (1984)
- In re S.A., 2019-Ohio-4782, ¶ 46
- State v. Davenport, 2018-Ohio-2933, ¶ 25

