

SUPREME COURT OF GEORGIA

Shoffner v. State

Shoffner · No. S26A0529 · Decided May 19, 2026

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Georgia affirmed Anthony Douglas Shoffner Jr.’s convictions for two counts of malice murder and two counts of possession of a knife during the commission of a felony. The court rejected his challenges to the sufficiency of the evidence and the admission of his custodial statement, held that his mistrial claim was not preserved, and concluded that he failed to establish ineffective assistance of trial counsel.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Georgia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Bethel, Justice
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of Georgia
DECIDED	May 19, 2026
DOCKET	S26A0529
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Shoffner appealed his convictions and sentences for two counts of malice murder and two counts of possession of a knife during the commission of a felony, following the denial of his amended motion for new trial.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Federal due-process sufficiency claims are reviewed under whether, viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution, any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements beyond a reasonable doubt. Voluntariness and factual findings concerning custodial statements are reviewed for clear error, with the State bearing the burden of proving voluntariness by a preponderance of the evidence. Preservation of a mistrial claim is reviewed under the requirement that the motion be made promptly. Ineffective-assistance claims are evaluated under Strickland's deficient-performance and prejudice requirements.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion
PARTIES	Anthony Douglas Shoffner Jr. v. The State

TOPICS

criminal procedure

miranda rights

suppression of evidence

ineffective assistance

appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal law

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the evidence was constitutionally sufficient to support the convictions for malice murder and possession of a knife during the commission of a felony.
2. Whether the trial court erred in denying the motion to suppress Shoffner's March 12, 2020 custodial statement.
3. Whether Shoffner preserved his claim that the trial court should have granted a mistrial based on his sister's allegedly improper testimony.
4. Whether trial counsel rendered ineffective assistance by failing to prepare adequately, failing to provide or review discovery and evidence, failing to interview witnesses, and inadequately advising Shoffner about testifying.
5. Whether the sufficiency challenge to counts for which Shoffner was not sentenced was moot.

HOLDINGS

1. The evidence was sufficient under *Jackson v. Virginia* to support Shoffner's convictions for malice murder and possession of a knife during the commission of a felony. Sufficiency review considers all evidence admitted at trial, even evidence the defendant contends was improperly admitted.
2. Because Shoffner was sentenced only on two malice-murder counts and two knife-possession counts, his challenge to the remaining counts was moot, and review was limited to the four sentenced counts.
3. The trial court did not clearly err in finding that Shoffner's March 12, 2020 custodial statement was voluntary and that he knowingly and intelligently waived his Miranda rights.
4. Shoffner's claim that the trial court should have granted a mistrial based on his sister's testimony was not preserved for appellate review because he did not object contemporaneously, move to strike the response, or timely renew the mistrial motion after the curative instruction.
5. Shoffner failed to establish deficient performance or prejudice based on counsel's alleged failure to prepare for trial, provide or review discovery and evidence, or interview all State witnesses.
6. Shoffner failed to establish deficient performance concerning counsel's advice about his right to testify because the record showed that counsel advised him, explained that the ultimate decision was his, and Shoffner knowingly chose not to testify.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“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.” (3)

“It is well settled that a motion for mistrial must be made as soon as the party is aware of the matter giving rise to the motion” (7)

“To prevail on his claims, Shoffner bears the burden of showing both that his trial counsel’s performance was professionally deficient and that he was prejudiced by that deficient performance.” (8)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On March 11, 2020, Kenneth and Rebecca Griffin were found stabbed to death in their apartment. Earlier that morning, Shoffner was seen walking the Griffins' dogs and leaving in Kenneth's Jeep; he later abandoned the dogs, sold Kenneth's gaming equipment, attacked a maintenance worker with a baseball bat, and was arrested at a pharmacy. A search of the Jeep produced knives, jewelry, watches, and a gaming-store receipt, and one knife had staining consistent with dried blood. The next day, after receiving and waiving Miranda rights, Shoffner gave a recorded custodial statement taking responsibility for the murders and identifying the locations of the murder weapon and the victims' cell phones.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

A Houston County grand jury indicted Shoffner on murder, aggravated assault, and knife-possession charges. His first June 2022 jury trial ended in a mistrial; at a retrial the following week, the jury found him guilty on all counts. The trial court imposed consecutive sentences of life without parole for the two malice-murder convictions and consecutive five-year sentences for the two knife-possession convictions; other counts merged or were vacated by operation of law. The trial court denied Shoffner's amended motion for new trial on September 22, 2025, and the Supreme Court of Georgia affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Jackson v. Virginia, 443 U.S. 307, 319 (1979)
- Copeland v. State, 314 Ga. 44, 47 (2022)
- Golden v. State, 310 Ga. 538, 540 n.2 (2020)
- Scoggins v. State, 317 Ga. 832, 837 n.6 (2023)
- Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436 (1966)
- Brown v. State, 304 Ga. 435, 439 (2018)
- Prince v. State, 277 Ga. 230, 232 (2003)
- Norwood v. State, 303 Ga. 78, 82 (2018)
- Soto v. State, 303 Ga. 517, 523 (2018)
- Taylor v. State, 315 Ga. 630, 650 (2023)
- Pittman v. State, 318 Ga. 819, 829 (2024)
- State v. Spratlin, 305 Ga. 585, 594 (2019)

- Robinson v. State, ____ Ga. ____ (927 S.E.2d 199) (2026), S26A0282, 2026 Ga. LEXIS 77, *2-*3 (Ga. Mar. 3, 2026)
- Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 687 (1984)
- Thurman v. State, 311 Ga. 277, 278-279 (2021)
- Tabor v. State, 315 Ga. 240, 245-246 (2022)
- Williams v. State, 316 Ga. 304, 320 (2023)
- Nabors v. State, 320 Ga. 43, 49-50 (2024)

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