

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
LOUISIANA

Blake Hunter Wright v. Jackson Offshore Operators, LLC, et al.

Wright · No. 25-92 · Decided February 5, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana denied Blake Hunter Wright’s motion for partial summary judgment on his unseaworthiness claim. The court held that disputed issues of material fact concerning the deck board’s intended purpose, seaworthiness, and the alleged injury precluded summary judgment.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Barry W. Ashe
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana
DECIDED	February 5, 2026
DOCKET	25-92
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved for partial summary judgment on his maritime unseaworthiness claim. Defendants opposed the motion, arguing that disputed issues of material fact precluded summary judgment.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment was denied because disputed issues of material fact remained concerning the alleged unseaworthy condition, the purpose and fitness of the deck board, the existence and extent of any injury, and causation.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown
PARTIES	Blake Hunter Wright v. Jackson Offshore Operators, LLC, Jackson Offshore Holdings, LLC

TOPICS

- unseaworthiness
- summary judgment
- admiralty
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Wright was entitled to partial summary judgment on his claim that the M/V Storm was unseaworthy because a deteriorated deck board was not reasonably fit for its intended purpose.
2. Whether disputed issues of material fact concerning the deck board's purpose and fitness, the risk of harm, Wright's alleged injury, and causation precluded summary judgment.

HOLDINGS

1. Partial summary judgment was denied because disputed issues of material fact precluded judgment on Wright's unseaworthiness claim.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The issue of seaworthiness is a finding of fact, which is generally best left for a jury to decide.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Wright allegedly injured himself when a deteriorated deck board on the M/V Storm gave way, causing his foot to drop by up to two inches. He contended that the deck board was unseaworthy because it was internally rotten and not reasonably fit to serve as a work area for the vessel's deck crew. Defendants disputed the deck board's intended purpose, the significance of the alleged collapse, and whether Wright was injured and whether the deck board caused any injury.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Blake Hunter Wright sought partial summary judgment based on his contention that a deteriorated deck board on the M/V Storm rendered the vessel unseaworthy. Jackson Offshore Operators, LLC and Jackson Offshore Holdings, LLC opposed the motion, disputing the deck board's intended purpose, whether it was reasonably fit for that purpose, whether the alleged condition created an unreasonable risk of harm, and whether Wright was injured and, if so, what caused the injury. The district court denied the motion.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Williams v. Sea Support Ventures LLC, 708 F. Supp. 3d 813, 820 (E.D. La. 2023)
- Mahnich v. Southern S.S. Co., 321 U.S. 96, 98 (1944)
- Boudreaux v. United States, 280 F.3d 461, 468 (5th Cir. 2002)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA BLAKE HUNTER WRIGHT CIVIL ACTION VERSUS NO. 25-92 JACKSON OFFSHORE SECTION M (4) OPERATORS, LLC, et al. ORDER & REASONS Before the Court is a motion for partial summary judgment filed by plaintiff Blake Hunter Wright.¹ Wright seeks an order finding that the vessel on which he was allegedly injured, the M/V Storm, was unseaworthy because the deck board that supposedly gave way was deteriorated (i.e., “internally rotten”) and thus not reasonably fit for its intended purpose, which he says was to provide a work area for the vessel’s deck crew.² Defendants Jackson Offshore Operators, LLC and Jackson Offshore Holdings, LLC (together, “Defendants”) respond in opposition, arguing that there are disputed issues of material fact that preclude summary judgment on Wright’s unseaworthiness claim.³ In particular, Defendants contend that Wright has not shown that the deck board was not reasonably fit for its intended purpose, which they say was to provide a durable and rough surface on which to land and transport cargo, to take wear, and, when necessary, to fail so as to prevent damage to the Storm’s steel deck.⁴ Further, Defendants contend that, to the extent that the deck boards had a secondary purpose of providing a safe walking surface, there are disputed issues of material fact that preclude

1 R. Doc.

27. 2 R. Doc. 27-1 at 1-25. 3 R. Doc. 35. 4 Id. at 1, 3, 8-16. summary judgment on their seaworthiness.⁵ For example, Defendants argue that, because Wright’s foot dropped a maximum of two inches, if at all, and the steel deck did not give way, “[a] jury could reasonably conclude that the risk of a deck board collapsing under a seaman’s weight and allowing him to fall up to two inches does not constitute an unreasonable risk of harm that would give rise to an unseaworthy condition.”⁶ Defendants also argue that there is a dispute as to whether Wright was actually injured and the cause of those alleged injuries.⁷ Wright replies in further support of his motion, arguing that, even if the deck boards were intended to protect the steel below, they served as a work surface and Defendants had a non- delegable duty to ensure that they were seaworthy.⁸ Wright also asserts that seaworthiness is not always an issue for the jury, that he has proved his case, and Defendants’ defenses ring hollow.⁹ Further, Wright contends that the cause of his accident and injury was unquestionably the deck boards.¹⁰ Having considered the parties’ memoranda, the record, and the applicable law, the Court denies Wright’s motion because, as pointed out by Defendants, there are disputed issues of material fact that preclude summary judgment on Wright’s unseaworthiness claim. “The issue of seaworthiness is a finding of fact, which is generally best left for a jury to decide.” *Williams v. Sea Support Ventures LLC*, 708 F. Supp. 3d 813, 820 (E.D.

La. 2023) (citing *Mahnich v. Southern S.S. Co.*, 321 U.S. 96, 98 (1944); *Boudreaux v. United States*, 280 F.3d 461, 468 (5th Cir. 2002)). Accordingly, for the foregoing reasons, 5 Id. at 14-16. 6 Id. at 1-16 (quote at 15) (emphasis in original). 7 Id. at 16-19. 8 R. Doc. 37 at 1-4. 9 Id. at 4-10. 10

Id. at 8-9. IT IS ORDERED that Wright's motion for partial summary judgment on his unseaworthiness claim (R.

Doc. 27) is DENIED. New Orleans, Louisiana, this 5th day of February, 2026.

BARRY W. ASHE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE