

MEMORANDUM DECISION

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IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF INDIANA

Tayler Majors,
Appellant-Defendant,

v.

State of Indiana,
Appellee-Plaintiff

October 5, 2023

Court of Appeals Case No.
23A-CR-743

Appeal from the Marion Superior
Court

The Honorable
Barbara Crawford, Senior Judge

Trial Court Cause No.
49D35-2206-CM-016392

Memorandum Decision by Judge May
Chief Judge Altice and Judge Foley concur.

May, Judge.

- [1] Tayler Majors appeals her conviction of Class A misdemeanor domestic battery.¹ Majors argues the State failed to rebut her self-defense claim. Because there was evidence in the record to support the trial court’s determination, we affirm Majors’ conviction.

Facts and Procedural History

- [2] On the morning of June 17, 2022, Majors was at her rental duplex with K.S., who was Majors’s “on and off” girlfriend. (Tr. Vol. 2 at 97.) K.S. had spent the night with Majors at her duplex. Majors asked to borrow K.S.’s cell phone to look up information and, while using the phone, found evidence that K.S. was “being disloyal.” (*Id.* at 29.) K.S. was in the bathroom at the time, and Majors gathered many of K.S.’s belongings and threw them down the stairs because she wanted K.S. out of her house. K.S. exited the bathroom and began to gather her things that were strewn down the stairway. As K.S. made her way down the stairs to leave, she lost her balance and reached for Majors to stabilize herself, but Majors’s shirt tore and both women fell down the stairs.
- [3] After K.S. got outside, she realized she did not have her “crossbody bag” that held her identification, credit cards, and concealed carry weapon. (*Id.* at 33.) K.S. knocked on Majors’s door until Majors finally answered, and K.S. asked

¹ Ind. Code § 35-42-2-1.3(a)(1).

for her bag. Majors retrieved the bag from inside and when she brought it outside, Majors dumped the contents onto the front yard and went back inside the house. K.S. picked up the gun and noticed there was “a bullet sticking out the head of the gun, so I’m trying to take that out” to prevent “any further damage to the firearm[.]” (*Id.* at 56.) When Majors saw K.S. messing with the gun, Majors “ran back out” of the house, knocked the gun out of K.S.’s hand, threw the gun toward the street, and began hitting K.S. repeatedly. (*Id.*) As Majors “was beating her up[.]” K.S. pleaded with Majors to stop, and Majors agreed to stop if K.S. would leave. (*Id.* at 76.) K.S. gathered her things, including the gun, and began to drive away.

[4] Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Officer Elizabeth Shell was the first officer to arrive on the scene of what had been dispatched as “a disturbance with a weapon[.]” (*Id.* at 62.) Officer Shell found Majors on the porch, and Majors reported she and “her girlfriend had gotten into a verbal altercation, uh, about her girlfriend possibly cheating.” (*Id.* at 62-63.) Majors insisted the altercation was only verbal, but Officer Shell noticed Majors’s shirt was torn and Majors had red marks on her arms. After K.S. drove away from Majors’s duplex, she realized the road was blocked, so she had to turn around. As she drove back past Majors’s duplex, K.S. noticed police had arrived, and she stopped to talk to the officers. Officer Shell noticed K.S. “had injuries consistent with something more than a verbal altercation.” (*Id.* at 65.) K.S. “had a cut on her forehead that was bleeding, um, enough to where there was actually blood on her shirt, um, and her face was bruised around her eyes.”

(*Id.*) At the scene, both K.S. and Majors denied that a gun was pointed at anyone or was part of the altercation. Police could not locate a gun at the scene. Officer Shell placed Majors under arrest for committing what Officer Shell believed was “[b]attery with injury.” (*Id.* at 68.)

[5] On June 18, 2022, the State charged Majors with Class A misdemeanor domestic battery and Class A misdemeanor battery resulting in bodily injury.² The court held a bench trial on March 8, 2023, at which K.S. and Majors both testified. The court found Majors had committed both charges, but it merged the findings and entered a conviction only of domestic battery. Immediately thereafter, the court held the sentencing hearing and imposed a 365-day sentence, which it suspended to non-reporting probation.

Discussion and Decision

[6] Majors challenges the sufficiency of the State’s evidence to rebut her claim of self-defense. “A valid claim of self-defense is a legal justification for an otherwise criminal act.” *Coleman v. State*, 946 N.E.2d 1160, 1165 (Ind. 2011). “[I]t is the policy of this state that people have a right to defend themselves and third parties from physical harm and crime.” Ind. Code § 35-41-3-2(a). Accordingly, the legislature provided: “A person is justified in using reasonable force against any other person to protect the person or a third person from what

² Ind. Code § 35-42-2-1(c)(1).

the person reasonably believes to be the imminent use of unlawful force.” Ind. Code § 35-41-3-2(c). To successfully assert a self-defense claim, a defendant must have “acted without fault, been in a place where he or she had a right to be, and been in reasonable fear or apprehension of bodily harm.” *Henson v. State*, 786 N.E.2d 274, 277 (Ind. 2003). At trial, the State has the burden of negating at least one of the necessary elements of a defendant’s claim of self-defense. *Wilson v. State*, 770 N.E.2d 799, 800 (Ind. 2002).

[7] On appeal, we review sufficiency of evidence claims like all other sufficiency arguments. *Id.* at 801. We neither judge the credibility of the witnesses nor reweigh the evidence. *Id.* If sufficient evidence of probative value supports the conclusion of the trier of fact, then we cannot overturn the verdict. *Id.* We can reverse “only if no reasonable person could say that self-defense was negated by the State beyond a reasonable doubt.” *Id.*

[8] Majors took the stand and testified in support of her self-defense claim:

The first thing she did after I tossed the bag down, she didn’t pick up the rest of the belongings. First she picked up the gun, first—first thing she did was try to cock the gun, but the gun was jammed. Um, after she cocked the gun at me and I noticed it was jammed, that was when I charged at her. I knocked the gun out of her hand. I threw it across the street. After I threw the gun across the street is when we proceeded to fight. Um, yeah, at that point, I was beating her up. I know that. She – we got to a point and she was screaming. She was like, okay, I’m sorry. Please stop. Get off of me. And I was, like, okay I’ll get off of you if you take your things and go.

(Tr. Vol. 2 at 76.) Majors also testified that she hit K.S. to protect herself because K.S. had pointed a gun at her. (*Id.* at 85.)

[9] However, our review of the trial court’s determination requires us to look at the facts most favorable to the court’s decision, without reweighing evidence or assessing credibility. *See Wilson*, 770 N.E.2d at 801 (stating standard of review). Here, the facts most favorable to the conviction are found in K.S.’s testimony., who testified she was trying to remove the bullet that was protruding from the gun to prevent damage to the gun. K.S. also testified that she did not point the gun at Majors, that she picked it up in the process of gathering the things Majors had dumped into the yard. Majors herself admits to “beating [K.S.] up” after throwing the gun toward the street. (Tr. Vol. 2 at 76.) This evidence could allow a fact-finder to determine that Majors did not act in self-defense. *See Larkin v. State*, 173 N.E.3d 662, 670 (Ind. 2021) (“the State met its burden by presenting evidence that allowed the jury to reject Larkin’s self-defense claim”), *reh’g denied*.

Conclusion

[10] Because the facts most favorable to the judgment could allow the trial court to determine that Majors was not acting in self-defense when she battered K.S., we affirm Majors’s conviction of Class A misdemeanor domestic battery.

[11] Affirmed.

Altice, C.J., and Foley, J., concur.