

Cecilton man acquitted of all charges in attempted murder case



ELKTON — A Cecil County Circuit Court jury has acquitted a Cecilton man of all seven charges — including attempted murder — in a criminal case in which he stood accused of firing a bullet at a work van traveling on an Elkton-area road in July 2020.

Jurors deliberated 14 minutes on Wednesday before finding the defendant, River Jordan Gatewood, 23, of the 200 block of Water Street, not guilty of attempted second-degree murder, first-degree assault and five related charges at the conclusion of a one-day trial.

Attempted second-degree murder and first-degree assault, the case's only felony charges, carry maximum sentences of 30 years and 25 years respectively.

Elkton-based lawyer C. Evan Rollins represented Gatewood, who did not testify in his own defense.

Rollins maintained at trial that key parts of the suspect description provided by purported victim did not match Gatewood's features. For example, the purported victim, who testified as a state

witness, indicated that the suspect had a tattoo of what he believed to be Roman numerals on his neck. Gatewood does not have any tattoos on his neck, Rollins pointed out.

Along those lines, a snippet-length video gleaned from Gatewood's cell phone and presented as evidence by prosecutors shows only a hand holding a pistol. The gun-holding hand seen in that video has a tattoo. Gatewood does not have a tattoo on his hand, Rollins argued.

Gatewood stood accused of firing a bullet at a work van traveling on Delancy Road, near Danford Drive, at approximately 2 p.m. on July 31, 2020 — shattering the rear window and narrowly missing the purported victim, according to court records, which further indicate that Maryland State Police crime scene technicians recovered the bullet in the back of van's driver's seat.

That shooting occurred shortly after the purported victim had been engaged in an argument outside the Royal Farms in the 1100 block of East Pulaski Highway (Route 40) with a man, whom he later identified as Gatewood, over parking, court records show.

During the argument, the man pointed at a gun case lying on or near the driver's seat of his white Dodge Charger and threatened the purported victim, according to court records.

After that, the purported victim and the man drove away, both making left turns out of the convenience store parking lot before heading north on Delancy Road. Surveillance video shows the man in the Dodge Charger turn onto Delancy Road ahead of the purported victim in the work van — within a moment before the bullet shattered the rear window of the work van and entered the vehicle.

Rollins argued that it would have been impossible for the bullet to have entered the work van through the rear window if the suspect vehicle was driving in front of that vehicle.

The purported victim called police after he got home, where he noticed that his work van's rear window was "shattered consistent with the gunshot he heard while driving," according to court records.

Investigators included a picture of Gatewood in a photo line-up, after linking him to the Dodge Charger in question, and the purported victim pointed to it when identifying a suspect after viewing all six presented photos of possible suspects, according to court records. An MSP trooper had stopped Gatewood in that Dodge Charger some six months earlier for an unrelated reason, court records show.

Based on surveillance footage, Gatewood and his Dodge Charger were in that Royal Farms parking lot around the time of the incident, police said. The surveillance camera rendered images of the Dodge Charger's license plate and of Gatewood, who matched the suspect description given by the purported victim, police added.

Investigators arrested Gatewood on Aug. 5, 2020, five days after the incident, court records show. Gatewood spent 15 days in the Cecil County Detention Center on no bond, before he was released on Aug. 20, 2020 on an unsecured \$25,000 bond, according to court records.

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