



NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Man Convicted of Domestic Assault Despite Attempts to Tamper with Victim

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Patterson announces that Felix Mcgrundy Seals, 31, of Springfield, Missouri was convicted yesterday evening by a Greene County Jury of domestic assault in the second degree, domestic assault in the third degree and one count of an attempt to tamper with a victim. The jury deliberated for approximately one and a half hours before returning its verdict.

Mr. Patterson stated, “This case demonstrates the commitment of the Springfield Police Department and the Greene County Prosecutor’s office to holding domestic batterers accountable.” Mr. Patterson also noted that this case illustrates both the difficulty encountered by law enforcement in prosecuting domestic violence cases and the power and control that offenders continue to exercise over their victims long after the crimes occurred.

The State presented evidence to the jury that on February 6, 2013, Springfield Police Officer Craig Harter was dispatched to 631 S. Suburban to investigate the report of a fight. When he arrived Officer Harter contacted the victim and observed that she had a bloody knee and bruises on the right side of her face and right arm. When asked at the scene how she was injured, the victim explained that her boyfriend, the defendant Felix Seals, had drug her down a flight of stairs, punched her in the face, and jerked her around by the arm. When Officer Harter asked the defendant about the victim’s injuries, the defendant stated the knee injury was an old injury and that she probably just fell down the stairs.

On March 13, 2013, Springfield Police Officer Gomez was dispatched to the Baymont Hotel at 3776 S. Glenstone. An employee of the hotel told the jury he called the police because of a disturbance at the hotel in room 148. The employee explained that he

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went to investigate the noise and knocked on the hotel room door. When the defendant cracked open the door the employee was able to see past him and saw the victim cowering in the corner of the room scantily dressed. The victim then began screaming for help. The defendant told the employee everything was fine, don't call the cops, she is just crazy and on drugs. The victim used the opportunity to run out of the room and the employee escorted her to the hotel's kitchen. After asking the front desk not to call the police, the defendant fled the scene.

Officer Gomez told the jury that when he contacted the victim at the hotel he observed a large laceration to her right knee and several red areas around her neck. The victim told Officer Gomez that she had allowed her ex-boyfriend, the defendant, to come to her hotel room to get his belongings. She explained that while there the defendant became angry and began shouting at her because she had been texting with other males. She stated that the defendant accused her of being unfaithful and grabbed her by the neck. She explained to Officer Gomez that she attempted to shout for help, but the defendant tightened his grip and choked her causing her to become unconscious. After regaining consciousness the victim stated the defendant was crying and asked her why she made him do this to her. She further described how when the defendant calmed down he told her that he loved her. When the victim responded that she didn't want to be with the defendant any longer, he struck her on the left side of her body with a closed fist. The defendant then again grabbed her by the neck and proceeded to choke her when there was a knock on the door by the hotel employee.

The defendant was arrested by the Springfield Police two days later. While in jail the defendant called the victim several times. During the phone calls the defendant threatened the victim, accused her of being with another man and stated he would break her jaw. The defendant also told her that if no one comes to court the charges would go away. The defendant directed the victim to go to the hotel and tell the hotel employees to "lay back" and that it was not him in the room. In later calls the defendant told the victim she needed to fill out an affidavit stating she had not been assaulted by him, that she had been high and that she would not come to court. He directed her to have this affidavit notarized and to deliver it to the prosecutor's office. In the same calls the defendant would both threaten the victim and then later tell her he loved her.

It was anticipated by the State that the victim would not appear for trial. Based on the defendant's threats the Court ruled that if the victim did not appear, the Court would find that the defendant had forfeited his right to confrontation and would allow in evidence the victim's Statements to police. The day before jury selection, the defendant called the victim again and they discussed her appearing at trial. Ultimately, the victim did testify at the jury trial and claimed that on February 6, 2013, she had simply fallen down the stairs and that on March 13, 2013; she had been drunk, that she had attacked the defendant and he had simply restrained her. First Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Chapman, however, was able to question the victim and introduce the victim's

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prior Statements to the responding officers about how the injuries actually occurred. The victim claimed either to not remember making these Statements or that she made them because she was just mad at the defendant. In addition, the victim was shown her own Face Book posts including a photo with a black eye that she claimed in the post was caused by the defendant. She admitted that the post was hers but explained that the injury was caused by a cell phone that accidentally bounced off of a car window striking her in the eye. She explained the post by stating she was jealous and did not want any other women to have the defendant so she wanted to make him look bad.

During his testimony, Springfield Police Detective Alberto Estrada explained to the jury that it is not uncommon for victims of domestic assault to be reluctant to cooperate in cases against their abusers. In closing arguments, First Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Chapman pointed out to the jury that the victim's statements to the responding officers when she was in need of, and had, their immediate protection from the defendant were credible and not her denials in court after being threatened by the defendant.

The jury trial was presided over by The Honorable Calvin Holden. The defendant is a prior domestic violence offender (different victim) and a prior and persistent felon. As such the defendant is subject to a sentence of up to fifteen years on Count I, domestic assault in the second degree; of up to seven years on Count II, domestic assault in the third degree; and of up to fifteen years on Count III, attempt to tamper with a victim. Judge Holden set a sentencing hearing for October 17, 2014, at 3:00 p.m. following a sentencing assessment report by the Department of Probation and Parole.

This case is being prosecuted by First Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Chapman of the Persons Unit, Greene County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. It was investigated by the Springfield Police Department and Detective Alberto Estrada was the lead investigator assigned to the case.

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