

Jury Sentences Serial Domestic Abuser to Maximum

An Austin County jury handed down maximum sentences to Richard Gatlin, 30, of Sealy, after a four-day trial before District Judge Jeff Steinhauser last Thursday.

The jury convicted Gatlin of Assault Bodily Injury– Domestic Violence (with Previous Conviction) and a lesser offense of Attempted Assault Bodily Injury – Domestic Violence (with Previous Conviction).

The State presented evidence that on May 28, 2023, Gatlin attempted to injure his girlfriend. When a female roommate intervened, Gatlin then assaulted the roommate by punching her in the face several times, causing a bloody nose and significant bruising.

Sealy Police officers Ivan Tapia and David Buehler arrived on-scene within three minutes of being dispatched to the disturbance. The officers, along with Sgt. Chad Matura, investigated and quickly took Gatlin into custody.

The defense argued that Gatlin did not intend to hurt his girlfriend and that the injured roommate did not actually live with the couple.

The jury deliberated an hour and a half through lunch before returning the two guilty verdicts.

Assistant District Attorney Ben Nystrom presented the State's case with assistance from First Assistant District Attorney Brandy Robinson and legal assistant Lisa Tobola.

Defense Attorney John Anderson represented Gatlin.

Assistant D.A. Nystrom presented punishment evidence that Gatlin was a Repeat Felony Offender, which increased Gatlin's punishment range under the law.

Gatlin had been convicted of three prior domestic violence-related assaults against three additional women in the past five years.

He was sentenced to 2 years in prison in 2021 for Assault – Family/Household Member in Galveston County, Texas.

Gatlin had remained jailed since July of 2023 for violating a protective order in his Austin County case. His custody status legally required the court to set his case as a high priority for trial.

Gatlin testified in his own defense at punishment.

The jury deliberated for 18 minutes before giving Gatlin the maximum prison sentence of 20 years for the Assault charge. The jury also assessed the maximum state jail sentence of 2 years for the Attempted Assault charge.

District Attorney Travis Koehn said, "We're grateful to the Sealy Police officers who immediately responded that night to protect the women and children in that home."

"Lt. Rebecca Kmiec of the Austin County Sheriff's Office also provided extremely valuable assistance in presenting the evidence against Gatlin at trial," Koehn added.

"The strongest evidence against Gatlin came from his own words to law enforcement and his trial testimony," First Assistant District Attorney Brandy Robinson stated.

"The jury clearly saw Gatlin's history of repeatedly abusing women without remorse, and the jury rightly determined that the maximum sentences were appropriate," Robinson said.