



(Docket No. 131340)

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, Appellant, v.
WILLIAM P. HEINTZ, Appellee.
Opinion filed January ___, 2026.

Justice Theis delivered the judgment of the court, with opinion.

This case concerns when conduct must have occurred to be admissible as evidence of a victim’s violent conduct under Illinois Rule of Evidence 405(b)(2). William Heintz was convicted of aggravated domestic battery, unlawful restraint, and domestic battery in Kankakee County. The jury acquitted him of aggravated murder. In the incident at question, the victim accused Heintz of wrenching her lip, kicking down a bathroom door and throwing her in the bathtub, stepping on her neck, running water on her face, and otherwise beating her while demanding access to her phone. Both the State and Heintz presented evidence on the tumultuous relationship between Heintz and the victim preceding this incident. But Heintz also sought to introduce evidence of incidents that occurred after the incident charged, contending they showed evidence of the victim’s violent character and claiming self-defense on his own part. The appellate court reversed his conviction, finding that the evidence of the victim’s violent conduct after the incident charged should have been admitted. The appellate court also found that Heintz should have been permitted to introduce evidence that he was acquitted of domestic violence in an incident the State described at trial.

The supreme court reversed the judgment of the appellate court and remanded for it to consider Heintz’s other claims there. Rule 405(b)(2) allows introduction of the victim’s “prior violent conduct,” and the rule cannot reasonably be read to mean only prior to trial, insofar as all evidence is limited to what exists prior to trial. Further, a victim’s violent conduct after the incident charged may be a result of the trauma of the attack itself and not a preexisting tendency to violence. Additionally, while the supreme court agreed it was error for the trial court to exclude the evidence that Heintz was acquitted in the other domestic violence trial without conducting a balancing test, the supreme court found the error harmless, as the evidence played a cumulative and minimal role in the overall evidence presented of violence between Heintz and the victim. The supreme court remanded to the appellate court to consider Heintz’s other claims raised there.