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# Pistorius jailed for 5 years

South African Olympic and Paralympic sprinter Oscar Pistorius was sentenced to five years in prison on Tuesday for killing his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp, ending a trial that has gripped South Africa and the world.

As judge Thokozile Masipa read out her decision on Pistorius's September 12 culpable homicide conviction, the 27-year-old, whose downfall has been likened to that of American football star O.J. Simpson, stood resolutely in the dock.

His only reaction was to wipe his eyes before two police officers led him down to the holding cells beneath the High Court in the heart of the South African capital. An armoured police vehicle took him from the court building.

Masipa -- only the second black woman to rise to the bench -- stressed the difficulty of arriving at a decision that was "fair and just to society and to the accused".

The 67-year-old also rebuffed suggestions that Pistorius -- a wealthy and influential white man -- might be able to secure preferential justice despite the "equality before law" guarantee enshrined in South Africa's post-apartheid constitution.

Steenkamp, a 29-year-old law graduate and model, died almost instantly on Valentine's Day last year when Pistorius shot her three times through a locked toilet door at his luxury Pretoria home.

The athlete maintained that he fired in the mistaken belief an intruder was hiding behind the door, a defence that struck a chord in a country with one of the world's highest rates of violent crime.



Oscar Pistorius sits forlorn in the dock as sentencing verdict is being read out at the Pretoria High Court yesterday.  
PHOTO: AFP

"Count one, culpable homicide: the sentence imposed is five years."  
- Judge Thokozile Masipa told Pistorius in the

"It would be a sad day for this country if an impression were to be created that there was one law for the poor and disadvantaged and another for the rich and famous."

"Justice was served. The judge had given the right sentence."  
- Family lawyer Dup De Bruyn told reporters outside the court.

The ruling African National Congress' Women's League, which is at the forefront of political efforts to tackle violence against South African women, immediately called

for an appeal by the state against the culpable homicide conviction.

With no minimum sentence for culpable homicide, South Africa's equivalent of manslaughter,

Pistorius could have been punished with a period of house arrest combined with community service.

Before the decision, protesters picketed against Pistorius outside the court, a sign of the anger that might have ensued and the damage that might have been done to the much-criticised judicial system if the sentence was seen as too light.

"Why are certain offenders more equal than others before the law?" said one demonstrator, Golden Miles Bhudu.

However, Masipa pointed to the moral and philosophical changes South Africa has undergone since the election of Nelson Mandela in 1994 and the end of white-minority apartheid rule, saying the "eye-for-an-eye" principle no longer applied and courts did not dispense mob justice.

"As a country we have moved on from the dark ages," she said. "Society cannot always get what they want because courts do not exist to win popularity contests."

Pistorius' defence lawyer, Barry Roux, said he expected the jailed athlete to serve only 10 months of the five-year sentence behind bars, and the remainder under house arrest.

However, South Africa's state prosecuting authority disputed this, saying Pistorius was likely to serve at least a third of his sentence in prison -- effectively 20 months.

On a separate firearms charge for which Pistorius was also found guilty, Masipa gave him a three-year suspended sentence.

The athlete, known as "Blade Runner" because of his carbon-fibre prosthetics, became one of the biggest names in world athletics at the London 2012 Olympics when he reached the semifinals of the 400m race against able-bodied athletes.

## TIMELINE

### 2013 FEBRUARY

14: South African police arrest Pistorius, a Paralympic and Olympic sprinter nicknamed the "Blade Runner", for the killing of Steenkamp, shot four times with one of his guns at his Pretoria house.

15: Pistorius bursts into tears as he is charged, denying murder "in the strongest terms".

19: Pistorius claims in an affidavit that he mistook Steenkamp for an intruder and was "filled with horrible fear" that someone had sneaked into his home.

20: Witnesses testify they heard arguing, a woman screaming and gunfire at Pistorius's house the night of the slaying, police tell the court.

21: US sportswear giant Nike suspends its contract with Pistorius.

22: Pistorius is granted bail set at one million rand (\$100,000, 75,000 euros).

MARCH 28: A court clears Pistorius for international travel, easing his strict bail terms.

APRIL 14: Pistorius is seen partying at a trendy Johannesburg hang-

out, media report.

MAY 20: Pistorius will not race this season, his agent says.

JUNE 28: Pistorius is to resume limited training for his mental wellbeing, but does not plan a return to competition, his family announces.

2014 JANUARY 23: Pistorius's lawyers and Steenkamp's family are discussing an out-of-court financial settlement, a lawyer says.

FEBRUARY 25: A judge rules that most of Pistorius's trial can be broadcast live, but not his testimony or that of witnesses who ask not to be filmed.

MARCH 3: The trial opens in Pretoria, before an army of journalists from around the world, with the testimony of a neighbour who told the court she heard "terrible screams" from a woman and shots.

13: Pistorius vomits when a picture of the dead model's body was flashed on the court's television screens.

APRIL

7-15: Pistorius takes the witness stand and begins with a tearful apology to the family of the woman he shot dead. This is followed by five days of often intense cross-examination, marked by several bouts of tears and breaks in the session. Pistorius steadfastly denies any intention to kill Steenkamp.

JUNE 30: After a six-week break, a panel of three psychiatrists and a psychologist conclude that Pistorius was not suffering from mental illness. He faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted of murder.

AUGUST 7: State prosecutor Gerrie Nel, in his final argument before the court, accuses Pistorius of concocting an alibi that led to a "snowball effect" of lies.

8: The trial concludes with closing arguments from the defence.

SEPTEMBER 12: Pistorius is found guilty of culpable homicide for shooting Steenkamp, but is cleared of murder.

OCTOBER 17: The prosecutor calls for a 10-year prison term, while the

## Bale, Ramos miss trip to Liverpool

European champions Real Madrid will be without Gareth Bale and Sergio Ramos for their Champions League trip to Liverpool on Wednesday as both were left out of Carlo Ancelotti's squad due to injury.

Bale is also a major doubt for Saturday's first El Clasico of the season against Barcelona due to an abdominal muscle injury.

Ramos has missed the last three games for club and country due to a calf problem, but his absence is more precautionary with an eye to Barca's visit to the Bernabeu.

French internationals Karim Benzema and Raphael Varane, who missed Saturday's 5-0 thrashing of Levante due to a fever, have been included in the squad that flew to England on Tuesday morning.

Madrid sit atop Group B having won both of their games so far to sit three points clear of Liverpool and Basel.

## Blind saves blushes

Daley Blind rescued spluttering Manchester United with a dramatic late equaliser in Monday's 2-2 draw against West Bromwich Albion at the Hawthorns.

Albion had twice led through Stephane Sessegnon and Saido Berahino, but United avoided an embarrassing defeat as substitute Marouane Fellaini equalised with his first United goal before Blind scored the second leveller in the 87th minute to ensure Louis van Gaal's side stretched their unbeaten run to three matches.

United's erratic display was another reminder to van Gaal that his team remain very much a work in progress.

They are without an away league win this season, suggesting they are a long way from rivalling Manchester City and Chelsea for the title this term.

Albion began with the confidence of a side who had won two of their previous three league matches, with Sessegnon almost sending Berahino clean through with a threaded pass after five minutes.

And the home side had to wait just another three minutes to take the lead courtesy of a stunning strike from Sessegnon.

Van Gaal is unlikely to have been too impressed with Luke Shaw's defending as the England left-back allowed Andre Wisdom to charge from his own half deep into United territory.

Wisdom's clever cut-back was met with a wonderfully whipped first-time effort from the edge of the area from the former Sunderland man which flew inside the right upright.

## Indian Super League Mendy clinches south-Indian derby

Bernard Mendy's wonder goal was the decider between Chennaiyin FC and Kerala Blasters as the home side made it two wins out of as many matches in the Indian Super League (ISL).

Elano Blumer put the Chennaiyin FC ahead as he converted his spot-kick however, the visitors equalized through Iain Hume. Bernard Mendy's bicycle kick found the back of the net and eventually fetched three points for Marco Materazzi yet again.

The 'South-Indian Derby' rang in changes in both line-ups. For the home side, Dhanachandra Singh and Bruno Pelissari made way for Harmanjot Khabra and John Stiven.

The visitors, Kerala too made two changes to their side with Jamie McAllister and Stephen Pearson being benched in favour of Sandesh Jhingan and Victor Herrera Forcada.

## Reds face Real challenge

Brendan Rodgers has challenged his Liverpool players to rise to the occasion when they face holders Real Madrid in a crucial Champions League showdown at Anfield on Wednesday.

Rodgers' side can't afford to lose any more ground in the race to qualify for the knockout stages after a shock loss against Basel in their previous Group B match.

The Reds have been well below their best of much of the season and there were more worrying signs for Rodgers on Sunday when QPR, the Premier League's bottom club, out-played Liverpool for long periods of an chaotic encounter.

Liverpool eventually won 3-2 despite twice squandering the lead in the final minutes.

Given Liverpool's defenders had huge trouble with QPR's willing but limited strike partnership of Bobby Zamora and Charlie Austin, it would be no surprise if Rodgers had suffered a few sleepless nights contemplating how his creaky defence will deal with Real's breathtaking array of attacking talent.

Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti has Cristiano Ronaldo in arguably the best form of his majestic career, while the likes of Karim Benzema, James Rodriguez, Toni Kroos and Luka Modric comprise a formidable support act for the spotlight-hogging Portugal star.

Ronaldo has broken a 71-year La Liga record by scoring 15 goals in the first eight matches of the season and is also just two short of Real legend Raul's Champions League record of 71 goals.

With a trip to Madrid next up in a fortnight, Rodgers knows a defeat on Wednesday would leave Liverpool in severe danger of bowing out of the competition at the first hurdle.

Yet European nights at Anfield, when the club's supporters routinely pump up the decibel count to ear-splitting levels, remain a unique experience that can unnervingly even the most seasoned performers.

Rodgers hopes the do-or-die nature of the tie, combined with the Anfield atmosphere, will lift his team out of their current malaise.

"Whenever you play in the big games the great competitors come out and I have no doubt with my players as their mentality is very strong," Rodgers said.

"It is a really exciting game on Wednesday. The work we put in over the last season or so means this is our reward but it is a game we want to go and win."

"Anfield is a special place for a Champions League football game and we are really looking forward to it."

"But you have to be careful - they are the best counter-attacking team in the world with the speed they have."

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