

MESSI HAILS KOBE

Lionel Messi has posted a tribute message to basketball legend Kobe Bryant, hailing him as "one of the greatest" and thanking him for helping to inspire his play. The post from Messi appeared on the Argentine's Facebook page: "It's always sad to hear when a sportsman is retiring. But @kobe Bryant will always be in the history books as one of the greatest," Messi wrote on the social-media platform. "It was he who helped me become interested in basketball. All the best in the next stage of your life, Kobe." Perhaps the most memorable double-act between Messi and Bryant was a video entitled 'Kobe v Messi: The Selfie Shootout' which got voted the 'Ad of the decade' by



Steenkamp's father 'satisfied'

AFP, Johannesburg

Reeva Steenkamp's father said Thursday he was "satisfied" after an appeal court judge found Oscar Pistorius guilty of murdering his daughter in a ruling that could see the Paralympian serve at least 15 years in prison.

"I'm satisfied with everything now," Bary Steenkamp told television reporters shortly after the judge threw out an early conviction for culpable homicide, or manslaughter.

"I would hope to God that all of this could have been prevented, but seeing that it has been done, let us now all get on with our lives."



A file photo of a smiling Reeva Steenkamp, who was shot dead by her boyfriend and South Africa's famed blade-runner Oscar Pistorius on Valentine's Day in 2013. South Africa's supreme court of appeal on Thursday found Pistorius guilty of murdering Steenkamp, overruling a trial court's earlier verdict of culpable homicide.

GUILTY OF MURDER

Pistorius now faces a long prison term

THE GUARDIAN

South Africa's supreme court of appeal has found Oscar Pistorius guilty of murdering his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, overturning a previous conviction for culpable homicide.

The court has ordered the original trial judge in Pretoria to impose a harsher sentence. No date has been set for this hearing. The minimum sentence for murder is 15 years in prison.

Pistorius is currently living under house arrest at his uncle's home in Pretoria, having been freed from prison after serving less than a year behind bars. He will reportedly be allowed to remain in correctional supervision until a new sentence is handed down.

Pistorius shot and killed Steenkamp on Valentine's Day in 2013, and later said he thought she was an intruder.

Justice Eric Leach, who read out an abridged version of the judgment on Thursday morning on behalf of the court, said: "The accused ought to have been found guilty of murder." He described Steenkamp's death as "a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions".

As is custom, Pistorius and his family were not in the court in Bloemfontein as the judgment was delivered. June Steenkamp, Reeva's mother, was seen sobbing on the stairs of the court in Bloemfontein after the judgment was read out.

Pistorius was released into house arrest in October having served one-fifth of his original five-year term, and has been performing court-mandated community service.

The appeal centred on the legal concept of dolus eventualis, or indirect intention - in layman's terms, the question of whether Pistorius had foreseen the possibility that he might kill somebody when he



fired four shots into the bathroom door.

The appeal court ruled (pdf) that the trial judge, Thokozile Masipa, had applied this concept incorrectly, saying her ruling was "confusing in various respects".

Leach said Pistorius did have the requisite legal intention to be found guilty of murder. "In these circumstances, I have no doubt that in firing the fatal shots the accused must have foreseen that whoever was behind the toilet door might

die, but reconciled with that event occurring, and gambled with that person's life," he said.

Leach was critical of Pistorius's inconsistent testimony in the original trial. "In the light of these contradictions [in Pistorius' testimony], one does not really know what his explanation is for having fired the fatal shots," he said.

The Pistorius family issued a brief statement saying: "We have taken note of the judgment that has just been handed down by the supreme court of appeal. The legal team will study the finding and we will be guided by them in terms of options going forward. We will not be commenting any further at this stage."

The African National Congress Women's League, vocal critics of Masipa's judgment, welcomed the new conviction. "We are happy with what the judges decided today," said the Free State chair Mapaseka Nkoane.

Trial Timeline

2013

FEBRUARY 14: Police arrest the Paralympic and Olympic sprinter for killing model Reeva Steenkamp, 29, who was shot four times at his Pretoria home.

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

FEBRUARY 22: Pistorius is granted bail.

2014

FEBRUARY 25: A judge rules that most of his trial can be broadcast live, but not his testimony.

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

MARCH 13: Pistorius vomits when a picture of Steenkamp's body is flashed on the court's television screens.

APRIL 7-15: Pistorius takes the stand and begins with a tearful apology to Steenkamp's family. This is followed by five days of often intense cross-examination where Pistorius steadfastly denied any intention to kill Steenkamp.

SEPTEMBER 12: Pistorius is found

guilty of culpable homicide or manslaughter.

OCTOBER 21: Judge Thokozile Masipa sentences Pistorius to a maximum of five years in jail. The athlete is immediately taken to Pretoria prison.

DECEMBER 10: The judge grants prosecutors -- who describe the sen-



Chief appeals court judge Eric Leach

tence as "shockingly light and inappropriate" -- leave to appeal.

2015

OCTOBER 19: Pistorius is allowed out of prison after just one year to spend the remainder of his sentence under house arrest at his uncle's mansion in Pretoria.

DECEMBER 3: The Supreme Court of Appeal convicts Pistorius of murder, saying his testimony was "vacillating and untruthful".



June Steenkamp (C), the mother of Reeve Steenkamp, is comforted during the court hearing in Bloemfontein yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

HO TRAM OPEN Siddikur's steady start

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's premier golfer Siddikur Rahman made a steady start in the Ho Tram Open in Vietnam yesterday. The 31-year-old golfer settled for a two-under-par (69) in the first round after trading four birdies for two bogeys on the opening day at the picturesque Bluffs Ho Tram Strip.

That effort put the two-time Asian Tour winner tied for 34th, seven strokes behind the leader, Charlie Wi of Korea. Wi fired a course-record of nine-under-par (62) to grab a two-shot lead over Thai duo Dhanthai Boonma and Thaworn Wiratchant. A total of 132 golfers from across and beyond Asia are taking part in the 1.5m-dollar event.

Premier div chess from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

The Walton Premier Division Chess League will get underway tomorrow at the National Sports Council, with ten teams taking part in the ten-day event. Defending champions Bangladesh Navy and nine other teams will play in round-robin format.

The champions and the runners-up teams will receive cash awards and trophies while the third-place finishers will receive crest, according to information provided by the organisers at the press conference held at the NSC Auditorium yesterday.

There will be separate awards for highest-point earning players as well.

Real face Cup expulsion

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid face being thrown out of this season's Copa del Rey after reportedly fielding an ineligible player in the first leg of their fourth round tie against Cadiz on Wednesday.

Russian international Denis Cheryshev opened the scoring in Andalusia, but shouldn't have been on the field as he was due to serve a one-game ban in the competition after picking up three yellow cards whilst on loan at Villarreal last season.

Cheryshev was replaced a minute into the second-half by Mateo Kovacic. "Clearly we didn't know. Villarreal and the federation hadn't warned us," said Madrid boss Rafael Benitez.

"When we knew we substituted him to show good faith."

Isco scored twice after the break before Cristian Marquez's late consolation rounded off the scoring in a 3-1 Madrid win.

However, the result could yet prove meaningless if Madrid are proved to

have fallen foul of the competition's rules with Cadiz president Manolo Vizcaino confirming his club will launch a formal complaint.

"We have decided to report the ineligible line-up," he said.

"It hurts us to do so with a friendly club, but the decision taken has been firm and unanimous."

Real Madrid director of institutional relations Emilio Butragueno also laid the blame at the Spanish Football Federation and Villarreal for not informing Madrid of the ban.

"We didn't know about the situation, we didn't receive any notification from the federation nor Villarreal," he told Canal Plus.

"I also want to say that Cheryshev himself didn't know of any possible ban."

Second division side Osasuna were thrown out of the Cup earlier this season for fielding an ineligible player in their second round tie against Mirandes.

The error is the latest blow for Madrid after a disastrous couple of weeks that has

RESULTS

Barcelona 6 (Alves 4, Sandro 21, 31, 69, El Haddadi 51, 76) Villanovense 1 (Juanfran 29)

Barcelona win 6-1 on aggregate

Barakaldo 1 (Arroyo 16) Valencia 3 (Cancelo 19, Gaya 65, Parejo 90-pen)

Logrones 0 Sevilla 3 (Coke 11, Krohn-Delhi 37, Immobile 58)

Real Betis 2 (Vadillo 47, Vargas 90) Sporting Gijon 0 Rayo Vallecano 2 (Bangoura 6, Ebert 28) Getafe 0 Almeria 1 (Pozo 44) Celta Vigo 3 (Aspas 16, 35, Guidetti 74)

Llagostera 1 (Juanjo 22) Deportivo la Coruna 2 (Cartabia 61, Riera 74)

Cadiz 1 (Marquez 88) Real Madrid 3 (Cheryshev 3,

seen the 10-time European champions fall six points behind La Liga leaders Barcelona after being hammered 4-0 at home by Barca 11 days ago.

It is also not the first time Madrid have been caught out by an administrative problem this season after the signing of Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea fell through as the clubs missed the deadline for the



Real Madrid midfielder Denis Cheryshev (C) pumps his fist after scoring the opening goal against Cadiz during their Copa del Rey match at the Ramon de Carranza Stadium on Wednesday. However, Cheryshev was ineligible to play in this match and Real Madrid face expulsion for their mistake.

PHOTO: AFP

WC might expand to 40 teams

BBC SPORT

Fifa will debate a proposal to expand the World Cup from 32 teams to 40.

The change can be approved by Fifa's executive committee without consent from the 209 member associations, and could come into effect from 2026.

The proposal is said to have been discussed yesterday in Zurich, where a meeting is taking place focused on reforms of world football's governing body.

Earlier, two high-ranking Fifa officials were arrested in the Swiss city on suspicion of taking bribes.

They are alleged to have taken money for selling marketing rights in connection with football tournaments in Latin America, as well as World Cup qualifying matches.

The arrests came on the opening day of Fifa's Exco meeting. France '98 featured 32 teams, up from the 24 that had qualified for every World Cup since 1982.

La Liga agrees 2.65b euro TV deal

AFP, Madrid

The Spanish league announced on Wednesday that it has agreed a domestic television deal worth 2.65 billion euros (\$2.8 billion, £1.86 billion) for the next three seasons.

A subsidiary of telecommunications giant Telefonica, Movistar, will have first choice of one match from each round of fixtures for 250 million euros a season.

Rahane steers India

AFP, New Delhi



Ajinkya Rahane smashed an unbeaten 89 to steer India to 231-7 on the opening day of the fourth and final Test against South Africa in smoggy conditions in New Delhi on Thursday.

Rahane, 27, hit two sixes and nine bound-aries in his 155-ball knock, the highest score in what has otherwise been a low-scoring series that India leads 2-0.

The talented right-hander, dropped on 78 by South Africa skipper Hashim Amla, defied an inspired bowling attack led by off-spinner Dane Piedt to consolidate the Indian innings.

Piedt grabbed four wickets for 101 runs while recalled paceman Kyle Abbott chipped in with three scalps on a strip that offered inconsistent bounce to the bowlers.

"We will try to strike with the new ball in the morning. It will be good if we can keep them under 250," said Piedt, who had been out of action this year until this Test with a shoulder injury.

"It is a two-paced wicket, the odd one is skidding on. (But) I think it has been a good wicket for everyone today," he said.

India are looking to pile on the agony for the top-ranked tourists after winning the first and third Tests to take an unassailable lead, while the second in Bangalore was washed out.

Under smoggy skies, Rahane raced to his eighth Test half-century and the first in India with a slog-swept six off Piedt followed by a boundary one ball later.

He also shared 70 runs with his captain Virat Kohli who hit a breezy 44 off 62 balls before a freak dismissal cut short his innings.

The 25-year-old Piedt, playing only his second Test and the first this year, provided the early breakthroughs, dismissing Murali Vijay (12) and opening partner Shikhar Dhawan (33).

Vijay was caught in the slips by Amla while Dhawan was given lbw, the sharply turning ball hitting his front pad as he tried to defend.

Piedt was lucky to get the scalp of Kohli, who tried to play a sweep shot, but the ball hit Temba Bavuma fielding at short leg and ricocheted up in the air.

An alert Dane Vilas then leapt quickly from behind the stumps and dived forward on the pitch to catch the ball with his gloves.

Rohit Sharma (one) almost gifted Piedt his fourth wicket, tamely holing out to Imran Tahir near the long-on fence.

Abbott sent back Cheteshwar Pujara (14) and Wriddhiman Saha, who saw his stumps uprooted in spectacular fashion at the stroke of tea.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: First innings 231 for 7 (Dhawan 33, Kohli 44, Rahane 89 not out, Jadeja 24; Abbott 3-23, Piedt 4-101)