

The life of Blade Runner Oscar Pistorius depends

THE HOUSE



THE WORLD WILL GIVE ITS VERDICT

THE man who inspired millions to believe in themselves now desperately needs to be believed.

Oscar Pistorius cut a lonely figure in a packed courtroom this week as the world came to grips with the astonishing case mounted against him.

That he shot dead his stunning model girlfriend remains the only fact.

Whether he meant to do so will be debated by two legal squads in Pretoria — and lounge room experts the world over.

Suddenly the flashing bulbs that once captured him in full sprint cast this athlete's dark silhouette across a room torn by

Aaron Langmaid

opinion; of those who still believe in him and others who never will again.

This was, after all, the hero for a new generation of South Africans.

A good-looking 26-year-old from Johannesburg who rose above the challenges of his disability to compete with able-bodied athletes. He was the Blade Runner, who proved that anything was possible.

But his remarkable story took a violent and bloody twist at his home in the early hours of Valentine's Day.

His defence team will argue that while Pistorius fired the shots that killed

on a judge, and his millions of fans, believing his story about that fatal night

THE TOILET



THE GUN

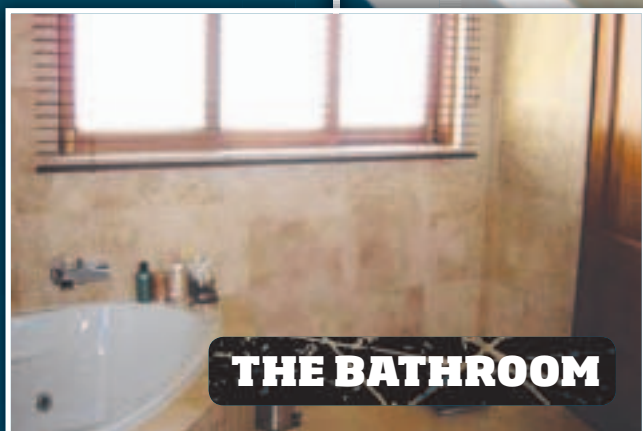


THE BUNGLE

Hilton Botha (pictured), the lead detective mounting the case against Pistorius, is dramatically dumped after it was revealed he was facing attempted murder charges related to a bus shooting in 2009. The national police chief calls in veteran investigator Lt Gen Vineshkumar Moonoo as Botha's replacement



THE BALCONY



THE BATHROOM

THE PROSECUTION CASE

- 1 A witness hears arguing coming from the house.
- 2 A "terrified" Reeva Steenkamp runs through the bathroom to the adjoining toilet and locks the door
- 3 Pistorius straps on his prosthetic legs and goes to the bathroom.
- 4 He fires four shots through the toilet door with a 9mm automatic pistol.
- 5 Three shots hit Ms Steenkamp. The bullets strike the right hand side of her body, indicating she is not sitting on the toilet when she is shot
- 6 Pistorius smashes down the locked door, picks her up and carries her to the ground floor
- 7 Police find her dead on the ground floor of the home

THE DEFENCE CASE

- 1 Reeva Steenkamp and Pistorius go to bed about 10pm
- 2 Around 4am the next day, Pistorius gets out of bed, goes to the balcony and brings in a fan
- 3 Hearing noises in the bathroom, he believes a burglar has entered the house
- 4 He grabs the 9mm automatic pistol from under his bed, and yells for Ms Steenkamp to call the police
- 5 Without his prosthetic legs, he runs to the bathroom and fires four shots into the toilet
- 6 When he realises Ms Steenkamp is not in bed, he smashes down the door of the toilet with the cricket bat and finds Ms Steenkamp critically wounded.
- 7 Pistorius carries Ms Steenkamp downstairs and she dies in his arms

Reeva Steenkamp, there was no intent to kill. This was just another shooting tragedy in a nation overrun by firearms.

But the battle lines drawn during this week's bail hearing will test Pistorius' family, his friends and his adoring public as his private life is unravelled. He had wowed the world at the London Olympics, and she was the reality TV star who had graced the cover of almost every glossy magazine across the nation.

But could South Africa's most glamorous couple have been hiding a deeply fractured relationship that was on the brink?

Not so, says defence law-

yer Barry Roux. He said the pair were deeply in love and had Pistorius proposed marriage, Ms Steenkamp would have accepted.

In his affidavit, Pistorius claimed that the night before the tragedy the pair had enjoyed a quiet dinner at home. He had watched TV and she had done yoga before handing him a Valentine's gift that was not to be opened until the morning.

What followed in the next six hours will be laid bare and scrutinised in court and by a global audience.

Prosecutors are already armed with at least one witness who reportedly heard arguing at their house between 2am and 4am.

But Pistorius said he woke before dawn and, without the aid of his prosthetic legs, walked on to the bedroom balcony to bring a fan inside, closing the sliding doors and drawing the curtains on his return.

It was then, he claims, he heard a noise coming from the ensuite bathroom.

"I felt a sense of terror rushing over me," he said in the statement. "I believed that someone had entered my house. I was too scared to switch a light on."

"I grabbed my 9mm pistol from underneath my bed. It was pitch dark in the bedroom and I thought Reeva was in bed."

"I noticed that the bath-

room window was open. It filled me with horror and fear of an intruder or intruders being inside the toilet. As I did not have my prosthetic legs on and felt extremely vulnerable, I knew I had to protect Reeva and myself."

Four shots were fired; three hit their mark. Ms Steenkamp was hit on her right side. Police say this indicates she had been standing or crouching behind the locked door for a reason.

Pistorius then claims it was only when he went back to the bed that he realised his partner wasn't in it.

He rushed on to the balcony to call for help before putting on his prosthetic

legs and attempting to kick the toilet door in.

Only then, he said, did he turn on the lights.

"I went back into the bedroom and grabbed my cricket bat to bash open the toilet door. A panel or panels broke off and I found the key on the floor and unlocked the door. Reeva was slumped over but alive."

Both legal teams agree Ms Steenkamp died as a result of her injuries just after 4am.

Investigating officer Hilton Botha, the lead detective and first police officer on the scene, said he arrived to find Ms Steenkamp's dead body at the bottom of the stairs.

But it was the detective's

fumbled evidence during the bail hearing that threw even more doubt on the case. Det Botha said he had no evidence to suggest Pistorius wasn't telling the truth, and even admitted one witness had been nowhere near the house when the shooting occurred.

But in the most dramatic twist, he was dumped from the prosecution team after it emerged he was facing attempted murder charges of his own.

It looms as the most riveting drama in South Africa's recent history. The only certainty is that — regardless of the trial outcome — Oscar Pistorius will be remembered for all the wrong reasons.