

ANDY HOOPER



Oscar Pistorius hopes to work with children on his release from jail after killing Reeva Steenkamp, right

Pistorius 'to coach children'

Sharon Feinstein
CAPE TOWN

OSCAR PISTORIUS hopes to secure parole terms that would allow him to work with children when he leaves prison as early as August.

The South African athlete was sentenced in October to five years in jail for manslaughter after admitting that he had shot his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, four times through a locked bathroom door. Pistorius becomes eligible for parole after serving just 10 months and his lawyers are keen to carve out a new role for him.

The athlete, who had his lower legs amputated when he was 11 months old, spends 23 hours a day in an isolation wing of a Pretoria prison.

Defence lawyers, who get access to their client once a week, say Pistorius is struggling to adjust to life inside and cope with his role in killing the

29-year-old model. "No way has he come to terms with what has happened to him," said Rohan Kruger, one of the team. "It will take a very long time. Frankly he's destroyed, in bits. He made a horrible mistake.

"Oscar is keen to become involved in assisting children in whatever opportunity will present."



OSCAR IS STILL CRYING FOR REEVA NOW. HE HAS NOT COME TO TERMS WITH WHAT HAPPENED

The terms of release are likely to define where Pistorius lives and the scope of his contact with others, as well as stipulating abstinence from alcohol and drugs, and a course of anger management.

Pistorius has acknowledged that the shooting on Valentine's Day 2013 will cast a shadow over the rest of his life.



He nevertheless believes he can take on outside responsibilities, including guiding, or mentoring, youths.

"Wherever he goes he will be Oscar Pistorius," said Kruger in a rare interview, revealing the behind-the-scenes work with the imprisoned athlete.

"A man as famous as him could never change his name. Anyway, that would be running away and disowning what happened.

"Oscar will have to lift his head and take it on the chin. He took it on the chin when he got the verdict and he will do the same when he walks through the prison gates in August.

"The parole conditions will be at their discretion: don't drink or do drugs; go to church. He'll have a psychological programme, an anger management course. They will set the parameters and he will keep to them."

Pistorius has had only limited access to the outside world since his conviction after a dramatic trial shown on television across the world.

"He is very lonely and spends most of his time reading the Bible and praying in his cell," Kruger said.

"He has no preferential treatment whatsoever in prison; in fact they are going to the ends of the earth to ensure he gets nothing extra or easy."

Pistorius's fame means that developments in the prison can be leaked to the press. One particular embarrassment came when a photograph emerged of Pistorius playing football with a man accused of involvement in a gangland killing.

"People completely misunderstood when they saw a photo of him playing soccer with Radovan Krejcir," said Kruger. "The man is also in the hospital section and happened to have his hour of exercise at the same time one day, so they kicked a ball around for a few minutes.

"That's all it was — it's not like Oscar has a life of leisure and football."

The 28-year-old double amputee, nicknamed "Blade

Runner" because of the carbon-fibre prosthetics on which he runs, says he mistook Steenkamp for an intruder.

The athlete's career earnings and other financial resources have been exhausted by the 20-month defence he mounted in courts against prosecution.

His lawyers, including his lead counsel Barry Roux, have not been paid for two months but continue to work on Pistorius's behalf. The South African state has launched an appeal to seek a conviction for murder, and those hearings could open shortly after he is granted parole.

"All Oscar has to his name is the shirt on his back and his underpants," said another lawyer. "He has spent all his money. Barry Roux was not paid for the last two months, but morally he could not just walk away from Oscar.

"He is utterly penniless — I mean zero. He sold his Audi, artworks, watches, even his guns, I believe."

Despite his perilous finances, the athlete has rejected book and film offers that have "poured in", the lawyer said.

"Oscar adored Reeva, one could see that all along. Why did she take her phone to the toilet that night? So she wouldn't have to switch on the lights and wake him, so she had some light, simple as that.

"And she wasn't dressed. That was misrepresented. She was sleeping in Oscar's shorts and in a T-shirt."

Kruger believes Pistorius is consumed by remorse over the events of the night.

"If you ask me to describe Oscar and his state of mind I'll say that he is totally stunned, he can't believe what's happened to him, and wishes he could rewind those last few seconds of his life, desperately and passionately, but of course he can't. It was never a case of premeditated murder.

"He is still crying for her now. I don't know if he hates himself. But he is in shock to this day."

@stforeign