

Cricket 112

Chapter 112

After a very first over of the match from Bhuvneshwar Kumar, conceding 14 runs, Virat Kohli handed the ball to Aarav Pathak, looking for control and some early breakthroughs. Pathak didn't disappoint, delivering a tight, disciplined maiden over, immediately applying pressure on the West Indies batters.

Fast forward to the 8th over, Pathak steaming in for his fourth. The tension was building, and Chris Gayle was looking to break free, but Pathak had other plans.

The first ball was a dot, nipping in just a little, surprising Gayle. Second ball, again full, and Gayle dead-batted it. The tension in the air was palpable. On the third delivery, Aarav adjusted his length slightly and increased the speed with the system buff and went for the fuller, straighter one right on middle. Gayle, expecting a bit of swing, misjudged it completely. The ball crashed into his pads, and the appeal went up in unison. A huge roar from Aarav and the Indian fielders! The umpire took a moment, raised the finger—OUT!

But wait, Gayle wasn't convinced. He took his time, thinking, contemplating, and then—with a deep breath—signaled for the review. The crowd held their breath as the giant screen flashed the ultra-edge. No spike. The ball tracking followed: pitched in line, impact in line, wickets hitting! Three reds. Decision stands! Gayle has to go!

Aarav erupted in celebration, pumping his fists, screaming at the top of his lungs as his teammates rushed toward him. Virat Kohli hugged him, patting his back, while Rohit Sharma clapped, a big smile on his face. The crowd was on their feet—this was a huge moment! The dangerous Chris Gayle, gone.

Sunil Gavaskar, ever the cricket purist, analyzed the delivery. "That was smart bowling from Pathak. He saw Gayle was looking to attack, so he went full and straight and at faster speed than usual. Excellent execution. This young man has a bright future ahead!"

Sidhu, not one to hold back, added his own poetic touch. "Beta, yeh woh gend thi jo Gayle ke armaan ka toofan le gayi! Sita Ram ka banwas ho ya Gayle ka ye out, parinaam ek hi tha—samapt!"

Jatin Sapru summed it up perfectly. "Aarav Pathak! The youngster has got the big fish, and India is right back in control!"

As Gayle walked back, shaking his head in disbelief, the Indian team celebrated. This was the breakthrough they needed, and Aarav had delivered it in style.

With the game settling into a rhythm, Virat Kohli turned back to Aarav Pathak in the 23rd over, looking for a breakthrough. The West Indies batters were starting to build a partnership, and India needed to break the momentum. Pathak, brimming with confidence.

Nicholas Pooran, standing tall at the crease, was watchful. Pathak ran in, delivered a tight line, angling the ball in, forcing Pooran onto the back foot. Every ball was met with a solid defensive stroke. No extravagant shots, no risks taken—just a battle of patience between bowler and batter. Pathak kept varying his pace, teasing with a fuller one, then pulling it back, but Pooran remained composed.

Dot. Dot. Dot. The over ended, and the pressure built. A maiden over—Pathak's second of the match. The Indians clapped in encouragement, knowing they were inching closer to a mistake.

Aarav Pathak continued his spell into the 25th over, the pressure mounting on the West Indies batters. The field was set, slip in place, and Pant crouched behind the stumps, eyes locked onto every movement. Pathak took a deep breath, adjusted his grip, and charged in.

The first ball—an outswinger, angling away, teasing the outside edge, but Nicholas Pooran was disciplined. He lifted his bat, letting it sail harmlessly to the keeper. A dot ball. Pathak smiled, knowing he was setting up something bigger.

He followed up with an inswinger, darting back in sharply. Again, Pooran judged it well, shouldering arms and letting it go to Pant. Two dots in a row. The pressure was tightening.

The third ball, on a good length, Pooran punched it straight to the fielder. No run again. Pathak was controlling the over beautifully, testing the batter's patience.

Fourth delivery—another inswinger, this time on middle and off, forcing Pooran to play. But he could only defend it back to the wicketkeeper. Pathak's line and length were immaculate.

The fifth ball—a sharp bouncer! Pooran saw it early and ducked under it. The Indian fielders let out a collective "Ooooooh" as the ball thudded into Pant's gloves.

Then came the moment. Sixth ball—fuller, moving away just a little. Pooran hesitated, unsure whether to play or leave. He poked at it, the ball catching the outside edge, flying straight into Pant's gloves!

Gone! Aarav Pathak had struck again! He roared in celebration, fists pumping in the air as the Indian team swarmed him. Pooran stood in disbelief, looking at the pitch, then up at the sky before dragging himself back to the pavilion. The crowd erupted, and Kohli ran in, patting Aarav on the back. A crucial breakthrough, and the momentum shifted once again in India's favor!

Harsha Bhogle: "Ladies and gentlemen, what a match we've witnessed today! And the man at the center of it all—118 runs with the bat, four crucial wickets with the ball, and a match-winning performance—please welcome the Man of the Match, Aarav Pathak!"

(Crowd erupts in applause as Aarav walks up to receive his award, smiling, still catching his breath from the thrilling game.)

Harsha Bhogle: "Aarav, congratulations! A phenomenal all-round performance today. 118 with the bat and then those four crucial wickets. Walk us through what was going through your mind during this game."

Aarav Pathak: (grinning) "Thank you so much, Harsha. It was an incredible game. The pitch was a bit tricky early on, so the plan was to build a partnership with Pant. Once I got set, I looked to accelerate and play my shots. I think the key was staying patient, assessing the conditions, and not rushing into big

shots too early. And credit to Pant as well—his innings was fantastic, and he kept the momentum going."

Harsha Bhogle: "You looked in complete control with the bat, shifting gears so smoothly. And that six off Chris Gayle was just massive! Tell us about your mindset when he came on to bowl."

Aarav Pathak: (laughs) "Yeah, that was unexpected! Gayle doesn't bowl too often these days, but I knew he'd try something different. I was expecting a loopy delivery, but he bowled a yorker. Luckily, I was ready for it and got a clean connection. Just one of those shots that came off well!"

Harsha Bhogle: "And with the ball, you were given the second over itself. A maiden first over, then that big wicket of Chris Gayle. How was it bowling to a powerhouse like him?"

Aarav Pathak: "It was a challenge! When Gayle is at the crease, you know the ball can disappear anytime. But my plan was simple—stick to my strengths, mix up my lengths, and not let him free his arms. The LBW was a big moment, and thankfully, it went our way!"

Harsha Bhogle: "Your wicket of Nicholas Pooran was also a turning point. A maiden over, then getting him out with that beautiful outswinger—was that something you had planned?"

Aarav Pathak: "Yes, I was trying to set him up. In previous over I bowled a few inswingers to keep him guessing, then went for the outswinger. He hesitated, and thankfully, the edge carried to Pant. It was a crucial moment in the match, and getting a batter like Pooran out at that stage helped us a lot."

Harsha Bhogle: "Winning a match with both bat and ball is a dream for any cricketer. This is still early in your career, but where does this performance rank for you?"

Aarav Pathak: (smiling) "It's definitely special. Representing India is already a dream, but contributing in both departments feel even better. The support from my teammates, the fans, and the team management has been amazing, and I'm really happy we could pull off this win."

Harsha Bhogle: "Before I let you go, one final question. You seem to be loving the big stage! What's next for Aarav Pathak?"

Aarav Pathak: (laughs) "Well, for now, just focusing on staying consistent and improving. Cricket is a game where every match is a new challenge, and I just want to keep contributing in whatever way I can."

Harsha Bhogle: "And we are sure you will! Ladies and gentlemen, your Man of the Match—Aarav Pathak!" (Crowd erupts in cheers as Aarav lifts the trophy, soaking in the applause.)

In the final match of the series, West Indies posted a competitive total of 240/7 in their 50 overs. The pitch wasn't the easiest to bat on, offering some movement for the bowlers and slowing down a bit in the middle overs.

West Indies started cautiously, with openers Evin Lewis and Shai Hope putting together a steady partnership. However, India kept things under control with tight bowling. Aarav Pathak was introduced into the attack again in the 12th over and struck, dismissing Shai Hope with a beautiful outswinger that took the edge to Pant behind the stumps.

Nicholas Pooran and Shimron Hetmyer tried to stabilize the innings, but India's bowlers kept the pressure on. Aarav returned for another spell in the 32nd over and picked up his second wicket, trapping Hetmyer in front with a sharp in-swing. West Indies pushed hard in the final overs, thanks to some big hitting from Kieron Pollard and Jason Holder, but Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Mohammed Shami held their nerve to restrict them to 240/7.

Chasing 241, India lost an early wicket, with Rohit Sharma departing cheaply. Dhawan and Virat Kohli then took control, steadying the innings with a strong partnership. Dhawan looked in fine touch but fell for 47, leaving the chase in the hands of Kohli and Shreyas Iyer.

Aarav Pathak walked in at No. 4 but couldn't make much of an impact this time, scoring just 11 before getting caught at deep midwicket while trying to accelerate. However, Kohli was in absolute beast mode, taking on the bowlers and ensuring India stayed ahead of the required rate. He brought up his century in style, finishing unbeaten and guiding India to a comfortable 6-wicket victory.

With this win, India clinched the series 2-1, sealing yet another successful home series. Kohli was the star of the match and also man of the match, but Aarav's all-round contributions throughout the series didn't go unnoticed. A well-fought contest, and India walked away with the trophy! IN 🏆.

As the players gathered in the dressing room after the post-match ceremonies, the atmosphere was filled with energy and satisfaction. The series had been a tough contest, but India had emerged victorious 2-1. The players settled in, some still wrapping ice packs around their legs, others sipping on energy drinks, when Virat Kohli stood up in the center of the room.

"Alright, boys, gather up!" Kohli called out, his voice commanding. The room quieted as all eyes turned toward the skipper. He looked around, taking in the faces of his teammates—some tired, some beaming with joy.

"This was a good series. West Indies played some really solid cricket, and they pushed us in every game. But what matters is how we responded—and we showed character, intent, and hunger to win!" His words were met with nods and murmurs of agreement.

He turned to Aarav, who had played a pivotal role in India's victories. "Special mention to this young guy—118 runs, 4 wickets in second game, and some crucial breakthroughs in the matches. Playing a proper All-Rounder role that the team needs and handling Number 4 batsman problem. What a series for you, man! We all know you're going to be a match-winner for India for a long time." The team erupted in cheers, clapping and patting Aarav on the back as he grinned.

"And today, Virat bhai showed why he's one of the best chasers in the world!" shouted Risabh Pant, nudging Kohli playfully. The team laughed as Kohli smiled, shaking his head.

"Look, it's never about just one player. This series was won because everyone stepped up when needed. Pant, that knock in the second game." Kohli said, looking at Rishabh Pant, who grinned and shrugged. "And how about Jadeja and Kedar's finish in both second and third ODIs for finishing ? Absolutely clutch under pressure!"

There was a round of applause for Ravindra Jadeja and Kedar Jadhav, who had ensured India posted a match-winning total in the previous game.

"Bhuvii, Shami, Khaleel—you guys kept things tight when it mattered. Every single one of you contributed, and that's what makes us a champion team." Kohli's voice was full of pride as he looked around the room.

"Alright, boys, the ODI series is done and dusted. We've got momentum, we've got belief, and we keep moving forward. Enjoy the win tonight, take a breather, and from tomorrow—focus shifts to the next challenge."

The team erupted into cheers, a few tossed their towels in the air, and the support staff clapped as well. India had won, but more importantly, they had won as a team.