

Cricket 118

Chapter 118

India continued their dominant form in the series, securing another comfortable victory. Aarav once again showcased his exceptional bowling skills, delivering a disciplined spell of four overs, conceding just 14 runs while taking two crucial wickets. His precision and control kept the South African batting lineup in check, restricting them to a below-par total.

When it was India's turn to bat, Shikhar Dhawan provided a steady start, scoring 28 runs before getting dismissed. However, India remained unfazed as Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma took charge of the chase. Both batsmen played with confidence and aggression, stitching together a strong partnership that ensured India's smooth path to victory.

Aarav, despite his stellar performance with the ball, did not get an opportunity to bat once again. The team's top-order proved too strong, sealing the win with ease. The Indian squad celebrated another comprehensive triumph, further solidifying their dominance in the series.

After this, we all were enjoying and having an after-match party as we dominated the limited-over series against South Africa. The atmosphere was electric, with laughter, music, and the satisfaction of a well-earned victory. Cold Drinks were being passed around, and the team was reliving the best moments from the series, celebrating yet another milestone in our journey.

As I was chatting with Rohit bhaiya and discussing the match, suddenly, out of nowhere, Rishabh Pant came running like a lunatic, shouting at the top of his lungs. His excitement was uncontrollable, and

everyone turned to look at him. As he reached us, he stopped abruptly, panting heavily. His eyes locked onto mine, and he just stood there staring, as if trying to process something unbelievable.

I raised my eyebrows, confused. "What happened, Rishabh? Why are you looking at me like that?" I asked.

He took a deep breath and then blurted out, "The new ICC rankings have been released, and you had a **HUGE** jump!"

My heart skipped a beat. Everyone around us suddenly got quiet, eager to hear what he was about to say next. "Tell me quickly, man!" I urged him.

With a wide grin on his face, he finally revealed the numbers. "In T20Is, you have now reached 36th position in the batsman rankings! In the bowler rankings, you are at 21st! And in the all-rounder category... you're 16th!"

There was a brief moment of silence before the room erupted with cheers and applause. I was stunned. I had never imagined my rankings would improve this drastically in such a short time. Virat bhaiya gave me a pat on the back, and Rohit bhaiya smiled proudly. "Not bad, Aarav. Not bad at all. You're making your mark!"

Before I could fully take in the news, Rishabh continued, "Wait, that's not all! In ODIs, you've also made a massive leap! You're now ranked 29th as a batsman, 27th as a bowler, and 21st as an all-rounder!"

My eyes widened in disbelief. The numbers felt unreal. I had worked so hard for this moment, but seeing it finally pay off on the world stage was something else. The entire team surrounded me, patting

my back and congratulating me. The celebration only intensified as we continued to enjoy the night, marking this as one of the most memorable moments of my cricketing journey so far.

After this match, I went home to meet my dad and mom. It had been a long time since I had spent quality time with them, and I cherished every moment. We sat together, had dinner, and spoke about my recent matches. My mother couldn't stop smiling and making my favorite dishes. Being with them after such an intense series was the best feeling.

A week later, Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Abhishek Sharma, and Arshdeep Singh returned to India after a long series against South Africa. I decided to pick them up from the airport, but since I had been gaining a lot of attention lately, I wanted to stay low-key. To avoid being recognized, I wore a mask, glasses, and a cap, blending into the crowd.

As soon as they stepped out of the terminal, I walked up to them casually. Gill was the first to notice me and squinted. "Wait a minute... Who's this shady guy lurking around?"

I chuckled and pulled down my mask slightly. "Surprise, surprise!"

Jaiswal laughed. "You look like a detective from a spy movie, bro! Why are you hiding?"

"Trying to avoid unnecessary attention," I said, shrugging. "Come on, let's get out of here before people recognize you guys."

We got into my car, and as we drove off, Abhishek leaned back and sighed. "Man, it feels good to be back. South Africa was amazing, but there's nothing like home."

"True that," Arshdeep added. "But you know what's even better? A good old celebration. What's the plan?"

I smirked. "How about a trip to Goa? Just us, chilling, having fun for a few days. We deserve a break."

Gill grinned. "Now that's a plan I can get behind!"

Jaiswal clapped his hands. "Alright then, Goa it is! Let's make it a trip to remember."

And so, without wasting any time, we packed our bags and left for Goa. The next three days were pure bliss. We hit some private beaches, went for late-night drives, tried out all sorts of local food, and just enjoyed each other's company. The laughter, the stories, and the carefree vibe made it one of the best trips we had ever taken.

On the last night, as we sat by the beach, watching the waves crash against the shore, Arshdeep said, "Man, life is good. These moments make everything worth it."

"Agreed," I said, taking a deep breath. "We work so hard on the field, but it's important to take a step back and just live."

Jaiswal stretched. "Too bad we have to leave tomorrow for Home."

The next morning, we all headed back home. Gill, Jaiswal, and Arshdeep had their flights to their respective cities, and after seeing them off, I finally returned home, refreshed and ready for the next challenge that awaited me in my cricketing journey.

After waking up the next morning, I stretched and rubbed my eyes as the first rays of sunlight seeped through the curtains. My phone buzzed beside me, jolting me fully awake. It was a call from my PR Manager, Suman.

Suman worked for Media Mantra, a PR agency that was a subsidiary of our family-owned entertainment empire, Pathak Entertainment. Our family had acquired some of the biggest film production houses in India, including Dharma Productions, Maddock Films, Arka Media Works, and Hombale Films. Media Mantra managed all these companies under one umbrella, making Pathak Entertainment one of the most powerful production conglomerates in the industry.

Answering the call groggily, I heard Suman's voice, laced with urgency.

"Where were you last night, sir?" she asked.

"At a party," I replied, still half-asleep.

"Someone recognized you and posted your pictures and videos from the club. You're trending!" she said, sounding concerned.

I sighed, sitting up. "Is it a big deal?" I asked.

"No, sir. We've already handled it. But please inform me about these things in advance next time."

I chuckled. "Sure, sure!"

After the call, I freshened up, took a shower, and made myself a cup of coffee. Feeling more awake, I sat at my study table, opened my laptop, and pulled out my notebook. I had plans brewing in my mind. With a two-month break ahead due to the upcoming Test series against South Africa and Bangladesh, I had enough time to strategize.

I flipped to a fresh page and began writing my future plans.

Three months left until 2020. After that, the world will be hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, causing lockdowns for at least six months. I need to act fast and set things up before everything changes.

Thanks to my system reward—Business Brain, I had the knowledge and intuition to build and scale businesses efficiently. Now was the time to put it to use.

I scribbled down the first major idea:

PatMart – Online Delivery Service:

Due to the pandemic, store footfall will decrease drastically. The solution? A rapid, efficient online delivery service that guarantees deliveries in 20-30 minutes. The first six months will be spent developing the technology for the delivery system. When lockdowns hit, we will already be prepared. Once restrictions ease, we will integrate PatMart with our existing food chain, Pat Culinaria. Instead of investing in dark stores, we will use Pat Culinaria's delivery network, allowing us to capture the market faster with minimal additional investment.

I leaned back, satisfied with the plan. The next step was expanding into the health sector.

I wrote:

Health and Wellness Expansion:

We have already started investing in health-related products: organic and healthy drinks, nutritious snacks, herbal tonics (Kadha), toothpaste, and other essentials. Pathak Entertainment's network of celebrities will be our key marketing weapon. With the right endorsements, our products will reach millions.

Finally, I noted down my next focus: Project Astra.

Astra was my vision for something revolutionary, but it wasn't time to get into specifics yet. For now, I needed to solidify PatMart and the health sector expansion.

Feeling a surge of excitement, I picked up my phone and called my father.

"Dad, I have something important to discuss. I need your time."

"Of course, beta. Come to my study in 15 minutes," he said.

Fifteen minutes later, I sat across from him, explaining my entire plan. I couldn't tell him about COVID directly, but I framed it as an upgrade to how the world functions. I emphasized the shift toward online commerce and rapid delivery systems.

He listened carefully, nodding. When I finished, he leaned back in his chair, deep in thought.

"You've thought this through well," he finally said. "We'll discuss the funding and logistics tomorrow."

A satisfied smile spread across my face. The pieces were falling into place. The future was mine to shape.

My next focus was Astra.

Later that day, I took my car to the office of Astra, my own company separate from the family business. As I entered the office building, the receptionist greeted me warmly. I immediately called Aaditya, Parag, and Rishabh Bhandari—the CTO of Astra—to my office.

Once they arrived, they greeted me respectfully, but I cut straight to the point.

Parag spoke first. "With the advanced tech you provided, we've created four AI models."

Aaditya continued, "Model 0.5 is a basic prototype that we are refining for our first product launch. Model 1 is quite advanced, Model 2 still needs work, and Model 4 is in the early development stage."

Rishabh then gave me a financial update. "Boss, you initially invested 100 crore, then increased it by another 100 crore. So, we currently have a total of 200 crore. Here's the breakdown:

12 crore went into setting up the company and acquisitions. 13 crore was spent on factory setup and manufacturing units. 80 crore is going into data centers—this is the biggest investment by an Indian company for data centers in India. 12 crore is allocated for R&D."

I nodded. "It's a huge investment, but necessary. We'll raise funds later when needed, but not right now. Is the product ready?"

Parag handed me a premium bag with Astra branding. "Yes, sir."

The packaging was sleek and premium. I opened the box to find a pair of smart glasses, a charging cable, a cleaning cloth, and a protective case.

"The packaging is impressive," I noted.

Parag grinned. "With Nadhi now integrated into Astra, our packaging has become top-tier, user-friendly, and premium."

I nodded in approval and asked if the glasses were charged. They confirmed, so I took them out and put them on.

Aaditya explained, "There's a power button on the right handle. Press it to turn them on. The glasses feature two cameras, four microphones, and two speakers. They are connected to Astra GPT 0.5, our first AI model."

He continued, "As per your specifications, the glasses can make calls, play music, and attend meetings when connected to a PC via Bluetooth. They function like TWS earbuds. The primary focus, however, is fitness—acting as a personal gym and yoga trainer. The glasses also allow users to capture 24MP photos and record 720p videos."

Rishabh then added, "Sir, the product is amazing, but we should also focus on international markets. These kinds of innovations perform best globally."

I smirked. "Sure, go ahead."

Rishabh continued, "To enter the global market, we should start by targeting the U.S., Japan, and Germany and other European Nations. These countries have high-tech adoption rates and a strong market for wearable AI. We could also set up a smaller testing phase in Dubai, where luxury tech is in high demand in the upcoming event next month."

I nodded. "That makes sense. Have we started reaching out to distributors?"

Parag replied, "Not yet, but we've identified key players who could be potential partners. We'll arrange meetings as soon as you give the go-ahead."

"Do it," I instructed. "Also, ensure we have a strong customer support system in place. The last thing we need is a PR disaster from early users."

Aaditya assured me, "We've already started training AI chatbots using Astra GPT 2 model and also human reps for 24/7 global support."

I looked down at the smart glasses in my hands. This was amazing and we would capture market soon and become the biggest dog in AI field.

After wrapping up the meeting about Astra's smart glasses, I turned to Aaditya and brought up another major project we had in development.

"How's the progress on the new app?" I asked, leaning back in my chair.

Aaditya nodded and immediately placed a call to Abhishek. Within a few minutes, Abhishek entered the office. He was currently leading a division of programmers working on a new app called "Reels."

Reels was our answer to TikTok, a short-video content platform that I knew would soon be banned in India. The market for short-form content was massive, and with TikTok's inevitable exit, there would be a huge vacuum to fill. I wanted to seize that opportunity before anyone else did.

As Abhishek settled into the chair, I wasted no time. "Give me an update. How is development progressing?"

Abhishek confidently replied, "Everything is on track, sir. The core functionalities are already built. Our user interface is smooth, and we've optimized the app for seamless performance. Right now, we're in the testing phase, fixing minor bugs, and polishing the user experience. We will be ready to launch on January 26th."

I nodded. "Good. That launch date is crucial. We are positioning this as India's own short-content platform, designed for Indian creators and audiences. But my long-term goal isn't just a TikTok alternative. I want Reels to evolve into a full-fledged social media platform, something that can compete with Instagram and dominate the Indian market."

Abhishek smiled. "We're aligned with that vision. We've already started working on additional features like stories, direct messaging, and integrated shopping. The goal is to make Reels a one-stop destination for entertainment, networking, and content creation."

I leaned forward, satisfied with his answer. "That's exactly what I wanted to hear. Make sure we create a strong influencer onboarding strategy. The moment we launch, I want top creators using our platform, drawing in millions of users instantly."

Aaditya jumped in. "We're already in talks with content creators and influencers from various fields—fitness, comedy, tech, and Bollywood. They are ready to make the switch as soon as we go live. and connections with Pathak Entertainment would help us a lot."

I smirked. "Perfect. Keep the momentum going. I want Reels to be THE app everyone is talking about."

Abhishek nodded. "Rest assured, sir. We'll be ready."

With that, I felt a sense of satisfaction. Everything was under control. Astra's AI-powered smart glasses were on track, and Reels was shaping up to be a game-changer in India's social media space.

But this was just the beginning. Bigger moves were yet to come.

