

## Cricket 119

### Chapter 119

It took me a month as for the next 2-3 months, we only had Test cricket first with South Africa then with Bangladesh and again a series of Test cricket with West Indies, and I wasn't in the Test squad. With that time on my hands, I turned my complete focus toward business, ensuring every detail was covered before I got busy with cricket again.

For the first month, my priority was Astra. I wanted to build distribution centers in international markets, especially in Europe, UAE, USA, and Australia. For Australia, we already had established PATMART stores there, so we decided to use them as our distributors, optimizing costs and operations. The marketing team had already launched an aggressive campaign—leveraging social media, TV commercials, magazine spreads, outdoor banners, and celebrity collaborations. Everything was being done at an unprecedented scale to establish Astra as a premium brand in the global market. The goal was clear: make Astra a name that echoed across continents, competing with the biggest tech brands in the industry.

Next, my focus shifted toward my family's company, particularly PatMart. One of the biggest priorities was taking PatMart online. Transitioning from a physical retail chain to a seamless quick-commerce platform was a massive task, requiring strategic planning and execution. Any disruption in the existing supply chain could lead to logistical nightmares, which was something we couldn't afford.

To ensure everything was on track, I scheduled a high-level meeting at our corporate headquarters. I wanted everyone—my father, the CTO, the logistics head, and key financial employees—to be on the same page.

As we gathered in the large conference room, my father, a seasoned businessman with decades of experience, leaned back in his chair, observing the room before speaking. His presence always commanded respect, and today was no different.

"So, what's the latest update on PatMart's online transition?" he asked, turning toward our CTO, Rajiv Mehra.

Rajiv adjusted his glasses and nodded. "Sir, we've made significant progress. The e-commerce platform is in its final stages of development. The UI is seamless, ensuring a user-friendly shopping experience. Our backend integration with stores, warehouses and inventory management is currently being tested. If everything goes well, we should be ready for a pilot launch in three metro cities next month."

I leaned forward. "What about logistics? Any bottlenecks in delivery efficiency?"

Sanjay, our logistics head, cleared his throat. "Initially, last-mile delivery in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities was a challenge, but we've overcome that by partnering with our Restaurants. Additionally, we've set up multiple regional distribution centers to speed up fulfillment. Currently customers should receive their orders within 24 hours in metro cities and within 48 hours in Tier-2 and 3 cities and with the proper advancement and integration of tech it should exceed and come around 20 minutes in tier 1 cities and 30 minutes in Tier 2-3 Cities."

My father tapped his fingers on the table thoughtfully. "Good. But do we have enough delivery personnel to meet demand, especially once we scale?"

Sanjay nodded. "Yes, sir. We've onboarded restaurants workers and some other gig workers our on onboard who can scale up operations based on demand. Moreover, we're integrating AI-based route optimization to enhance delivery efficiency, cutting down operational costs."

"And financially?" my father asked, shifting his focus to Mr. Sinha, our CFO.

Mr. Sinha flipped through his reports before responding. "We've allocated 200 crore for this expansion. So far, 80 crore has gone into platform development, 50 crore into logistics infrastructure, and another 30 crore into an extensive marketing campaign. That leaves us with a 40-crore buffer for contingencies. Based on our current projections, the platform should reach breakeven in 18 months."

I smirked. "That's a safe estimate. If we execute our strategies correctly, we could be profitable much sooner. PatMart already has a loyal customer base, and the trust factor will work in our favor. The key is making online shopping as seamless and convenient as the in-store experience, and you could increase Marketing budget so that when someone talk about quick-Commerce, the first name to there mind is PATMART."

My father gave a small smile. "That's why I trust you with this. You have the vision and the drive. But remember, sustainability is more important than speed. We're in this for long-term success."

I nodded. "Absolutely. We'll monitor everything closely and make data-driven decisions."

With all aspects aligned and the transition carefully planned, I felt confident. Every department was functioning like a well-oiled machine, and we were on track to make a significant impact in the industry. The best part? All divisions were profitable. The investments we made were paying off, and the company was thriving.

As I left the meeting, I took a deep breath. Everything was going according to plan. The wheels were in motion, and success was now just a matter of execution.

Everything was under control!

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In this Break season, I received an invitation from the National Cricket Academy to guide the upcoming U19 team preparing for the World Cup. It was an honor, and I immediately accepted the invite, heading to Bengaluru for the week-long boot camp. This would also be the last coaching event for Rahul Dravid before he stepped away from youth coaching—he had been my coach for the U19 team as well, making this even more special.

As soon as I reached the academy, I went straight to meet Dravid sir. He was seated in his office, casually going through some notes when I walked in. He looked up, and a warm smile spread across his face.

Dravid: "Look who finally decided to pass on his wisdom! How does it feel to be on this side of the game now?"

Me (laughing): "Honestly, sir, it feels strange! A years ago, I was the one sitting in the dressing room, nervous before every game. Now, I'm supposed to be the one giving advice!"

Dravid: "That's the cycle of cricket, my friend. One day, they'll be here in your position too. But you'll enjoy it—these boys are talented."

Me: "Any particular troublemakers I should look out for?"

Dravid (smirking): "You'll figure that out soon enough. Let's go meet them."

As we walked into the practice nets, the players spotted us, and almost instantly, a round of applause erupted. I raised my hand, signaling them to settle down.

Me: "Alright, alright! Who told you all to clap? I haven't done anything yet!"

One of the players (laughing): "Bhaiya, we are just excited to learn from you!"

Me: "In that case, let's start with something simple. Why don't you introduce yourselves to me? I know some of you already, but let's go one by one."

Some noticeable names stood out—Tilak Verma, Dhruv Jurel, and Arjun Tendulkar. After the introductions, we got down to business. Over the next few days, I worked closely with each player, sharing insights on their game.

For Tilak, we focused on refining his batting technique, particularly his footwork against spin. Dhruv Jurel needed to work on his pull shot, so I gave him a few drills to improve it. As for Arjun, we talked about his bowling rhythm and how he could generate better swing.

One evening, after a long practice session, Arjun and I were cooling down, sitting by the boundary line, when we started chatting casually.

Me: "So, Arjun, your surname sounds familiar... are you related to Sachin Tendulkar by any chance?" (grinning)

Arjun (laughing): "Yeah, you can say that. He's my dad."

Me (acting surprised): "Wait, wait, you mean Sachin sir Son?"

Arjun (shaking his head): "Oh come on, bhaiya! Stop messing with me!"

Me: "Alright, alright. But hey, I just found out something interesting. Your sister—Shraddha—is my friend!"

Arjun (raising an eyebrow): "Oh really? And does she know you're calling her your friend?"

Me: "Excuse me! Of course, she does. In fact, if you ever trouble me, I might just text her and tell her you're being annoying."

Arjun (laughing): "Okay, okay! No need to pull out the family contacts card!"

Over the next few days, the camp went by in a blur of intense training, feedback sessions, and fun banter. By the end of it, I had built a good bond with the team, and more importantly, I felt like I had given back to the game in some way.

On the final day, Dravid sir gathered the entire squad for a small closing ceremony. He gave an inspiring speech, reminding everyone that discipline and consistency would define their careers more than talent alone. As I looked at the young faces around me, I saw hunger and determination, a fire that reminded me of my own early days.

Afterwards, I handed out some signed jerseys as a farewell gift. Tilak, Dhruv, and Arjun even asked for some extra tips before I left.

Tilak: "Bhaiya, one last thing—how do you handle pressure in a big match?"

Me: "Simple. Treat it like any other game. Pressure is in your head. If you start thinking too much about the stakes, you lose focus. Just play the game ball by ball."

Jurel: "And what about keeping calm when you get sledged?"

Me (laughing): "Just smile at them and let your bat do the talking."

Arjun: "Thanks, bhaiya! Hope to play alongside you one day."

Me: "I have no doubt about that. Keep working hard, and I'll be waiting for you in the senior team!"

As I boarded my flight back, I knew that these young players had a bright future ahead. Who knows? Maybe a few of them would soon be playing alongside me in the senior team.

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Next Chapter:-

Now I went to Sachin sir's house as he had invited me for some personal practice sessions. Every day, I would train for about 1-2 hours under his guidance, fine-tuning my game. But while the practice was intense, what became more interesting was what happened after cricket—I found myself chatting more and more with his daughter, Shraddha.

At first, our conversations were casual, just simple exchanges. But over the next few weeks, we went from mere acquaintances to good friends. Here's how it unfolded:

Week 1:

After practice, I was cooling down in their backyard when Shraddha walked in, casually scrolling through her phone.

Shraddha: "So, cricket done for today?"

Me: "Yeah, for now. Trying to catch my breath. Your dad is ruthless!"

Shraddha (laughing): "Welcome to the club! He still coaches me and Arjun like we are competing in the World Cup."

Me: "Wait, you play too?"

Shraddha: "A little. More of a hobby. I prefer watching though. What about you? Besides cricket, any other interests?"

Me: "Oh, lots! Business, tech, even a bit of gaming. You?"

Shraddha: "I love music, traveling, and reading. Business sounds interesting though. You serious about it?"

Me: "Yeah! I have some ideas in the pipeline. Maybe I'll tell you more if we keep talking."

Shraddha: "That depends... if you're interesting enough."

We laughed, and that was the start of our daily conversations.

Week 2:

By now, we had developed a routine. After practice, we'd find ourselves in the living room or the garden, just talking.

Me: "So, tell me about your favorite travel destination."

Shraddha: "Germany. It's magical. The culture, the food, the vibe—it's everything! What about you?"

Me: "Haven't been there, but sounds amazing. I'd say Tokyo. It's futuristic but still holds onto its traditions."

Shraddha: "Interesting. Do you travel a lot?"

Me: "Yup, I love travelling."

Shraddha: "Great😊, But tell me, do you ever get tired of cricket?"

Me: "Sometimes. People forget that beyond the game, we are just normal people. That's why I enjoy these chats—it's refreshing."

Shraddha: "I get that. Sometimes I feel the same, like living in Dad's shadow."

Me: "Well, if it helps, I think you're doing just fine as Shraddha, not just Sachin's daughter."

Shraddha (smiling): "That's sweet. Maybe you're not so bad after all."

Week 3:

By the third week, our conversations had shifted to personal experiences and deeper topics.

Me: "So, tell me something not many people know about you."

Shraddha: "Hmm... I have a collection of letters I've written to my future self. I started when I was 12."

Me: "That's actually really cool. Do you ever read them?"

Shraddha: "Sometimes. It's funny how much I've changed. What about you? Any hidden secrets?"

Me: "Okay, don't laugh, but I used to be terrified of public speaking. Had my first interview, and I totally froze."

Shraddha (laughing): "No way! You seem so confident now."

Me: "Practice. Just like cricket. You get better with time."

Shraddha: "You really believe in that, don't you? Hard work, growth, all that?"

Me: "Yeah, because it's the only way to make something out of yourself."

Shraddha: "I admire that. Not everyone thinks that way."

Me: "Well, maybe that's why we get along."

Shraddha (grinning): "Maybe."

Week 4:

By now, it was effortless. We'd text even when I wasn't at practice, and conversations went late into the evening.

Me: "Guess what? I tried making Japanese Traditional dish, and it was disaster."

Shraddha: "You? Cooking? That's a mental image I wasn't ready for."

Me: "Hey, I never said I was a professional chef! But I could cook several dish that too that taste very good. It was a reward from myself for performing good in cricket! but you know what it made me think... ever tried something completely outside your comfort zone?"

Shraddha: "Yeah. I once tried stand-up comedy at an open mic. It was terrifying."

Me: "What?! How did it go?"

Shraddha: "I bombed. But at least I tried."

Me: "Respect. You're braver than I am."

Shraddha: "See? That's why I say we'd make a good team—you push yourself, I take risks."

Me: "Sounds like a plan. "

And just like that, our friendship was set.

Everything was under control!