

Cricket 121

Chapter 121

As I took my guard, I jogged in place, padded my bat on the pitch, and took a deep breath. The atmosphere was electrifying, the Australian fielders chirping around, the crowd buzzing. I could feel the weight of the moment, but my mind was locked in—focused only on the next delivery.

I adjusted my gloves, fixed my helmet, and settled into my stance. Mitchell Starc was already at the top of his mark, staring down at me like a predator eyeing its prey. He had fire in his eyes, and I knew what was coming—raw pace, precision, and an intent to rattle me early. But I was ready.

Mitchell Starc, Ball 4:

He sprinted in, his long strides eating up the turf as he loaded up. The ball was released—a searing yorker, pitched just outside the off stump, tailing in late. A brutal delivery. But I was prepared. My instincts kicked in as I moved swiftly, brought my bat down with finesse, and angled it perfectly. The timing was exquisite. The ball raced off my blade, threading the gap between Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith at cover like a needle through fabric.

Harsha Bhogle (Commentary): "Oh, would you look at that! What a shot from the youngster! First ball, absolute class! Aarav Pathak with a delicate touch, guiding that yorker through the smallest of gaps for four! This is artistry in motion."

Isa Guha: "That is pure timing! That was not an easy ball to put away, but he played it like a seasoned pro. The balance, the precision, the confidence—just outstanding."

The ball kissed the lush outfield and sped away to the boundary. I barely had to run. The crowd erupted, and I allowed myself a brief moment of satisfaction. I shook my head slightly, as if to tell myself to stay grounded, fixed my helmet, patted my bat on the pitch, and tapped Kohli's gloves in celebration.

He gave me a firm nod, a silent acknowledgment of the shot. "Good one" he muttered under his breath, his eyes still focused on the bowler.

Ball 5:

Starc, clearly not amused, ran in again, faster this time. He pitched it on a good length, angling it into my body. I held my stance, watched it closely, and met it with a solid forward defense. The ball bounced off my bat and rolled safely to mid-off.

Isa Guha: "Well played! He's showing composure now after that boundary. That's what you want to see—solid technique."

Ball 6:

Another quick delivery, slightly shorter this time. I stepped back, got in position early, and defended it with soft hands, letting the ball drop safely at my feet. No rush, no panic—just classic cricket.

Harsha Bhogle: "Aarav Pathak is showing why he's so highly rated! First the flair, now the patience. This is exactly what India needs at this stage."

I exhaled deeply as the over ended. Kohli walked up to me, patted my back.

I nodded, gripping my bat tighter. This was just the beginning.

India stood at 27/2. Virat Kohli and Aarav Pathak at the crease, there was hope. The 8th over was handed to Pat Cummins. The crowd settled in, anticipating a battle between bat and ball.

8th Over: Pat Cummins to Virat Kohli

Cummins steamed in, delivering a good-length ball on off-stump. Virat, ever so composed, leaned forward and elegantly placed it between cover and mid-off. The ball rolled away, and the duo quickly ran a single.

Harsha Bhogle: "Beautiful placement by Kohli. He knows he doesn't need to muscle the ball, just finds the gaps like an artist with a brush on a canvas. It's all about timing with him."

Now, it was Aarav's turn to face Cummins.

Aarav tapped his bat on the pitch, adjusted his stance, and watched as Cummins ran in. The delivery was on a good length, just outside off. Aarav stood tall and played it with soft hands, ensuring the ball didn't carry to the fielders. A solid defensive stroke.

Isa Guha: "Good composure from Aarav. He's reading the pace well and not rushing into anything. That's what India needs at this moment. The youngster looks determined."

Ball 3:

Cummins delivered a fuller ball, angling into middle and leg. Aarav was quick to react. He leaned slightly forward, rolled his wrists beautifully, and flicked it between mid-wicket and mid-on. The timing was impeccable, and the ball raced to the boundary ropes.

Aarav's POV: "I saw the ball heading toward my pads, and instinct took over. The timing felt perfect as the ball left my bat. The sound was crisp. I followed through, watching it glide past the infield and race away. The crowd roared. I shook my head slightly, adjusted my helmet, and tapped my bat on the pitch, absorbing the moment. Virat walked up, and we exchanged a quick glove punch."

Harsha Bhogle: "That is pure class from the youngster! A wristy flick, played with such elegance. You just don't teach that—it's instinct and talent coming together! Aarav Pathak is looking confident now!"

Ball 4:

Cummins switched to a back-of-a-length delivery, outside off. Aarav shifted his weight slightly back, controlled the shot, and guided it past point. The fielder chased, but the batsmen had already stolen two quick runs.

Isa Guha: "Brilliant placement! Aarav isn't just looking to hit—he's looking to build the innings, and that's exactly what India needs. He's showing remarkable maturity for a youngster on such a big stage."

Ball 5:

Cummins, sensing the aggression, pitched it up again. Aarav calmly met the ball with a dead bat, grounding it at his feet. Another solid defensive stroke. He nodded to himself, taking a deep breath, knowing he had to stay in control.

Ball 6:

Cummins tried to cramp Aarav for room with a short-of-a-length ball on middle stump. But Aarav was ready. He stepped out, created space, and launched the ball high into the sky. It soared over the deep mid-wicket boundary, disappearing into the stands.

Aarav's POV: "I saw the ball, picked the length early, and stepped out instinctively. My bat connected sweetly, and the moment I looked up, I knew—it was going all the way. As the ball disappeared over the boundary, a rush of adrenaline hit me. I smiled, turned to Virat, and we exchanged another firm glove punch. This was a statement shot."

Harsha Bhogle: "Oh, take a bow, Aarav Pathak! That is a fearless shot from the youngster! He stepped out, picked his spot, and sent it into the stands! This is incredible!"

Isa Guha: "That is pure confidence! Look at that smile, look at the way he celebrated with Kohli. India is back on track! You can feel the energy shifting now."

At the end of the over, India had moved to 40/2. The crowd was buzzing, and the match had just started to heat up. Kohli and Aarav stood in the center, focused, knowing they had a long way to go. But for now, the momentum had shifted, and with it, India's belief in a strong comeback. The battle had just begun.

Aarav and Kohli were now in complete control of the innings, effortlessly rotating the strike and keeping the scoreboard ticking. The understanding between them was evident as they found gaps with precision, converting singles into twos and keeping the fielders under constant pressure. The Australian bowlers were searching for a breakthrough, but the duo was playing smart, calculated cricket.

24th Over: Adam Zampa to Aarav Pathak

Zampa tossed one up on middle and leg. Aarav rocked back, gently nudging it towards deep square leg. He called for two immediately, pushing Virat to run hard. The crowd erupted as he reached his fifty. Aarav raised his bat towards the stands, soaking in the moment. It was a milestone to remember, but there was no time for celebrations—he had more work to do.

Next ball—Zampa floated one in the slot, and Aarav was ready. He took a big step forward, got under the ball, and unleashed a monstrous slog sweep. The connection was pure. No look, just power. The ball soared into the night sky and landed deep into the stands—102 meters! The stadium roared in awe.

Brett Lee: "That is outrageous from the youngster! A no-look six! He is showing the world why he is in this Indian team at just 19!"

Sunil Gavaskar: "What a way to follow up your fifty! Zampa gave him the flight, and Aarav sent it out of the park. Absolutely stunning!"

Virat walked up to Aarav, patted his back, and laughed seeing the trajectory of the ball. The partnership was flourishing, and they weren't slowing down.

28th Over: Ashton Agar to Virat Kohli

Virat, as composed as ever, worked the ball past mid-wicket and jogged a single. That single brought up his fifty as well. He raised his bat towards the dressing room, acknowledging the applause but quickly refocused on the task at hand. The team needed a big total, and he was determined to deliver.

India stood strong at 142/2 after 28 overs. The momentum was with them, but Australia needed a wicket desperately.

29th Over: Kane Richardson to Virat Kohli

Richardson, the pacer, was brought in to break the partnership. He charged in, delivering a ball on the sixth stump. Virat tried to guide it past the slips but got a faint edge. The ball flew straight into the hands of the first slip fielder. OUT! The Australians erupted in celebration. Kohli, after a well-made 51, had to walk back.

Harsha Bhogle: "Oh dear, that's a big wicket! Kohli was looking so good, but Richardson finds the edge! That's exactly what Australia needed."

Isa Guha: "That's the breakthrough they were desperate for! Now it's up to Aarav to anchor this innings and build with KL Rahul."

As Virat walked back, KL Rahul made his way to the crease, ready to take on the challenge alongside Aarav. The pressure was on, but the young prodigy at the other end was unfazed.

Sunil Gavaskar: Aarav had been magnificent so far, playing with maturity beyond his years. He had handled pace and spin alike, showcasing elegance and authority against some of the best bowlers in the world.

Against Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc, he played with sheer confidence. He used the pace of Cummins, guiding deliveries behind point, timing them to perfection. Against Starc's fiery yorkers, he got his bat down in time, solid in defense, and when Starc erred on length, he punched through covers with grace.

Allan Border: "This kid has something special. The way he's handling the best bowlers in the world at just 19 is remarkable. He's reading the game so well, picking his shots wisely."

Against spin, he was just as brilliant. Zampa and Agar tried varying their pace, but Aarav danced down the track with ease, nullifying the turn. He wasn't reckless—he calculated his attacks, choosing the right balls to go after.

His strike rotation was exceptional. He and Kohli had run between the wickets like a well-oiled machine, converting ones into twos, keeping the scoreboard moving. And every now and then, when the ball was in his arc, he punished it with a boundary, but never at the cost of his wicket.

Sunil Gavaskar: "This is batting at its finest! The maturity, the shot selection, the running between the wickets—Aarav Pathak is playing a gem of an innings."

India now had KL Rahul and Aarav at the crease, ready to push the total even further. The next phase of the innings would be crucial, and all eyes were on the young sensation, Aarav Pathak. Could he convert his fifty into a big one? The stage was set, and the battle was far from over.