

Cricket 123

Chapter 123

Aarav's POV

The crowd was loud, but my mind was sharper. The moment Virat Kohli handed me the ball, my fingers tightened around it.

I took a deep breath, cracked my neck, and looked at the field. Three slips, a gully, and an aggressive ring field. The Indians were pumped. The Australians were cautious.

Jasprit Bumrah had just bowled the match's first over a maiden to David Warner.

Now, it was my turn.

I ran in with power, my spikes digging into the hard pitch. The floodlights illuminated the field, and the energy was electric. Aaron Finch was on strike.

Ball 1 – Outswinger to KL Rahul (Dot Ball)

I held the ball with a firm grip, fingers placed slightly to create a late swing. I angled it across Finch, inviting him to drive.

The ball swung beautifully—too much.

It went straight to KL Rahul's gloves behind the stumps. Finch watched it closely, cautious. He was feeling the heat already.

KL Rahul clapped his gloves: "That's it, boy! Keep it coming!"

I smirked. The pressure was on.

Ball 2 –

I charged in faster this time.

The ball landed right at Finch's toes at 145 km/h.

Finch barely got his bat down in time. The ball deflected back toward the pitch.

I turned back, walking to my mark, staring at Finch. He avoided my eyes.

Ball 3 –

I wanted him to feel uncomfortable. I went for a classic outswinger again.

Finch tried to punch it through the offside but ended up hitting it straight to Virat Kohli at cover. No run.

Kohli smirked and threw the ball back to me.

I caught it, rubbing it against my pant to shine one side.

Ball 4 – Outswinger, Left Alone

This time, Finch read it better. He let the ball go.

KL Rahul caught the ball cleanly and gave me a shout of amazing bowling.

I just nodded. I was playing with Finch now.

Ball 5 –

I had been setting him up for this. After four outswingers, I angled one back in.

It swung in late, jaggging into Finch's pads.

Loud appeal!

I turned to the umpire, roaring for an LBW decision.

But the umpire shook his head.

Virat Kohli immediately signaled for a review!

The big screen flashed:

UltraEdge: No bat involved. Ball

Tracking: Pitching in line, impact in line... but missing the stumps by millimeters!

Not Out.

The Australians exhaled in relief.

Ball 6 –

Finch thought I was going to bowl another inswinger.

Instead, I changed my grip, holding the ball cross-seam to generate reverse swing.

I ran in hard, 149 km/h on the speed gun.

The ball landed on a good length, swung in late, and crashed into the off-stump!

TIMBER!

Aaron Finch – BOWLED!

Stumps shattered. Bails flying.

The stadium exploded.

Virat Kohli punched the air: "LET'S GOOOOO!"

I stood still for a second, absorbing the moment. Then I turned and let out a roar, thumping my chest.

Finch looked at his broken stumps, stunned. He had no idea what had just happened.

Commentary Box:

Harsha Bhogle: "OH, WHAT A DELIVERY! Absolute magic from Aarav Pathak! Reverse swing, sheer pace, and Aaron Finch is GONE FOR A DUCK!"

Brett Lee: "That is world-class fast bowling! He set Finch up, played mind games, and then BOOM! That's the perfect over."

I walked up, fists clenched, my breath heavy. Finch started walking back, his head down.

As he passed me, I didn't say anything—I just stared.

He didn't look back.

India had drawn first blood.

After dismissing Aaron Finch for a duck, I was charged up. Virat Kohli kept faith in me and Bumrah, letting us bowl the first 10 overs.

David Warner was playing cautiously, and Marnus Labuschagne was rotating the strike efficiently. Australia reached 51/1 at the end of the powerplay.

Even though we didn't get another wicket, the pressure was on them. Warner and Marnus weren't scoring freely. They were respecting every good delivery.

As we walked to the huddle, Virat clapped his hands.

"Boys, we've built pressure. Now let's squeeze them!"

KL Rahul added, "Warner's looking to take on the spinners. Let's test him now."

Virat signaled Kuldeep and Shami to bowl.

I took a deep breath and wiped the sweat off my forehead. I had bowled my first spell. Now it was time for spin and control.

Kuldeep Yadav came in with his deceptive wrist spin, and Shami was given the ball from the other end for pace variations and some over to Hardik too.

Australia started cautiously.

Kuldeep kept bowling tight lines. Marnus was cautious against him, while Warner stepped out occasionally. Shami mixed up his lengths, attacking the stumps.

The runs slowed down. By the 20th over, Australia was at 92/1.

We could feel the pressure building.

Shami, came to bowl in 25th over. He started this over tight where he even had chance to caught and bowl but missed the chance. then came the 4th ball of the over.

The ball rose awkwardly and caught the edge!

KL Rahul dived low and took a clean catch!

OUT!

Marnus Labuschagne – Gone for 32 runs.

The stadium erupted as Shami celebrated with his signature leap.

Commentary Box:

Harsha Bhogle: "That's the wicket India needed! Beautiful delivery from Shami, and KL Rahul makes no mistake!"

Australia: 125/2 after 25 overs.

As Marnus walked back disappointed, Steve Smith walked to the crease.

He took his guard and tapped the bat repeatedly, his mannerisms kicking in.

David Warner walked up to him, saying something.

Smith was a tough nut to crack. We had to break his rhythm early.

Current Match Situation (End of 25 Overs) Australia: 125/2 David Warner: 61 (playing steadily, anchoring the innings)* Steve Smith: 0 (new at the crease)*

India needed another quick breakthrough before these two settled in.

Virat clapped his hands again, shouting, "Boys, let's attack! One more wicket, and we're in complete control!"

The battle was far from over.

The game had reached its boiling point. David Warner and Steve Smith were unbreakable.

They had absorbed everything we threw at them. Shardul, Jadeja, Kuldeep, Pandya—all tried to break through, but nothing worked.

Virat, fuming from the slips, barked out instructions. Bumrah was handed the ball for an over in the hopes of magic. But not even he could shatter this partnership.

33rd Over –

Jadeja tossed up a delivery outside off. Smith, ever so elegant, got on his toes and punched it through covers. The ball raced to the boundary.

"Fifty for Steve Smith!" shouted the commentator. "A classic innings so far, composed, precise, and absolutely vital for Australia."

He raised his bat, acknowledging the applause from the Aussie dugout. We needed a breakthrough. Fast.

37th Over –

Shami steamed in, bowling with the last ounce of aggression he had. Warner leaned forward, pushed it to deep cover, and called for a single.

"And there it is! David Warner brings up his hundred!" shouted Harsha Bhogle in the commentary box. "A stunning knock under pressure, showing his resilience against a top-class Indian attack!"

Warner celebrated by leaping into the air, punching his glove. We couldn't afford to let him go any further.

38th Over – Jadeja Tosses It Up

Virat, still pacing in the slip cordon, yelled, "Come on, boys! Come on, boys!"

Jadeja got the ball. He eyed Warner and decided to test him with a flighted delivery. The moment it left his fingers, I knew what Warner would do.

It was tossed up, full and slow.

Warner's eyes lit up. He stepped forward, timed it beautifully, and launched it into the night sky. Straight over long-on.

It was going for six. Everyone knew it.

"That's high! That's massive! Warner's absolutely middled it!" screamed the commentator.

I was at long-on, watching the ball soar. My instincts took over. I sprinted back, eyes locked on the ball, every muscle tensed.

Five meters behind...

The ball was still rising.

Three meters...

I stretched my arms, but it was still out of reach.

One meter...

I knew I had no choice. I launched myself into the air, fully airborne. Both feet off the ground. Body completely horizontal. Arms stretched beyond limits.

The crowd held its breath.

"OH, HE'S GOING FOR IT!" shouted the commentator. "FLYING AARAV!!!"

Fingers stretched. Eyes locked.

The ball slammed into my right palm. But I wasn't done yet.

The momentum carried me backward, and for a split second, I saw the boundary rope approaching fast.

I twisted mid-air, tightened my grip on the ball, and—

Somehow, miraculously, I managed to land inside the ropes.

The moment my feet touched the ground, the entire stadium erupted.

THE COMMENTARY BOX GOES WILD!

"OH MY WORD!!!"

"WHAT HAVE WE JUST WITNESSED?!"

"AARAV HAS TAKEN AN APOSSIBLE CATCH!"

Virat sprinted toward me like a madman, roaring in celebration. Bumrah held his head in disbelief. KL Rahul threw his gloves in the air.

Warner stood there, stunned, his bat hanging limply in his hand. He couldn't believe it. He had timed the shot perfectly. It was a six. Until it wasn't.

Smith shook his head, hands on his hips. Even the Australian dressing room was in shock.

I clenched my fist and let out a roar, veins popping out of my neck.

David Warner OUT for 103.

The stadium shook with the noise. The replay flashed on the big screen, showing me launching myself like a missile, plucking the ball out of thin air.

The commentators were losing their minds.

"Unbelievable athleticism!"

"A catch that will be talked about for years!"

"That's Superman, right there!"

Virat grabbed my shoulders, shaking me. "Aarav, what was THAT?! That's the best catch I've ever seen!"

Rohit ran past, screaming, "Flying Aarav! You beauty!!!"

The crowd was still chanting my name.

I smiled, looking at the scoreboard.

Australia – 206/3 (38 overs).

Warner was gone. We had cracked the partnership.

And I had just pulled off the greatest catch of my life.

I took a deep breath and got back to my fielding position. The job wasn't done yet.

Smith, now at the crease alone, took off his helmet, wiped his face, and refocused.

Virat clapped his hands. "One brings two, boys! Let's finish this!"

Shardul took his mark. The next battle was about to begin.

The final 10 overs of the match were a display of pure dominance by India. I completed my spell of 10 overs, taking two more crucial wickets—Alex Carey and Steve Smith.

Bumrah came back with a vengeance.

The man with the deadly yorkers crushed Australia's hopes further, dismissing Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc in quick succession. Shami then sealed the deal by removing Adam Zampa.

Australia – 260/9 after 50 overs.

INDIA WINS THE MATCH!

The stadium erupted by Indian fans as we celebrated a dominant victory. But the night wasn't over yet.

Post-Match Ceremony – Man of the Match Award

Under the floodlights, I stood on the podium, still catching my breath as Ricky Ponting held the glittering Man of the Match trophy.

Harsha Bhogle, microphone in hand, smiled at me.

"Aarav, what a performance! A century, three wickets, and that gravity-defying catch! Walk us through your emotions right now."

I exhaled, grinning. "Honestly, I'm still processing everything. It was a dream game. Scoring a hundred was special, but that catch... I don't know what happened. I just reacted, and the next thing I knew, I had the ball in my hand."

The crowd cheered.

Ponting laughed. "Mate, I was in the Australian dressing room, and I'll tell you—we all thought it was a six. Then you flew out of nowhere! Was that instinct or pure madness?"

I chuckled. "Bit of both, I guess! I knew it was going over, so I just went for it. Lucky it stuck."

Harsha nodded. "And with the ball, you got three key wickets, including Smith. How did you approach your bowling today?"

I wiped the sweat off my forehead. "I kept it simple. Focused on hitting the right areas, mixing my pace. The wicket was slowing down, so cutters and reverse swing worked in my favor."

Ponting handed me the trophy. "Congratulations, Aarav. This is a performance to remember."

I lifted the trophy high as my teammates cheered.

Tonight, I had lived my dream.

The floodlights continued to shine brightly over the stadium as the match concluded. Fans were still buzzing, the energy electric even after the final ball had been bowled. But for cricket lovers, the match wasn't truly over until the experts had their say. Tonight's showdown was nothing short of legendary, and now, it was time to break it all down.

Post-Match Analysis – Live from the Studio

Inside the air-conditioned studio, a panel of cricket legends sat at the expert desk—Harsha Bhogle, Allan Border, Isha Guha, and Sunil Gavaskar—ready to dissect every moment of the thrilling encounter. The atmosphere was just as electric in the studio as it was in the stadium, as the experts prepared to unravel the brilliance that had just unfolded on the pitch.

Harsha Bhogle, always animated, kicked things off with his signature enthusiasm. "Well, folks, we just witnessed something truly special. A match filled with drama, moments of brilliance, and one name that dominated it all—Aarav!"

Allan Border, the former Australian captain, nodded with a smirk. "Absolutely, Harsha. As much as it hurts to say it from an Aussie perspective, that was an exhibition of pure class from the young man. A century, three wickets, and THAT catch! That was the stuff of legends. It's not often you see a player take complete control of a game like that, especially at such a young age."

Isha Guha leaned forward, smiling. "We keep talking about the next generation of cricketing superstars, and tonight, I think we've found our answer. Aarav is the best young cricketer of his generation right now. Not just the numbers—though they're incredible—but the way he owned the game. The confidence, the swagger, and the ability to deliver under pressure. It's remarkable. He wasn't just playing; he was dictating terms to some of the best players in the world."

Sunil Gavaskar, ever the veteran voice of cricket, nodded in agreement. "You see, these are the performances that define careers. A player like Aarav doesn't just play the game; he dictates it. The way he soaked in the pressure, played his shots, and then delivered with the ball—this was an all-rounder's dream match. And let's not forget the banter with the Aussies. That was a spectacle in itself."

Harsha chuckled. "Oh yes, we HAVE to talk about that! Right from the moment he walked in to bat, he was in their ears. And I have to say, he gave it back as good as he got! The confidence this young man has is something to admire. He was up against some of the fiercest bowlers in the world, and he never backed down."

Allan Border, laughing, said, "That's what made it even more entertaining! You love to see a player with that kind of competitive fire. He wasn't intimidated by the likes of Cummins and Starc chirping at him. He stood his ground, gave a bit back, and then let his bat do the talking. That's exactly what we used to do back in the day, and it's refreshing to see that spirit alive and well."

Isha Guha grinned. "And how about that little exchange with Steve Smith after he dismissed him? Aarav just gave him a smile, a wink, and patted his own shoulder like, 'Too easy, mate.' You don't often see that from a young player, and that's what makes him so special. He doesn't just play; he enjoys the battle, and he thrives under the spotlight."

Sunil Gavaskar, ever the purist, added, "I loved how he balanced it, though. There's a fine line between banter and arrogance. And Aarav stayed on the right side of it. He respected the game, respected his opponents, but never backed down. That's the hallmark of a future great. He understands the traditions of the sport but also knows how to bring his own brand of cricket to the field."

Harsha Bhogle leaned back in his chair. "Well, I think it's safe to say we have witnessed the rise of a new superstar. And if tonight's performance is anything to go by, we are in for one incredible career ahead."

As the studio wrapped up, the highlights of the match played on the big screen once more—Aarav's elegant strokes, his lethal bowling, and of course, that gravity-defying catch. The cricketing world had just found its new favorite star. The debates would continue, the discussions would go on, but one thing was certain—this night belonged to Aarav.

The replays of the catch went viral instantly. Social media exploded with reactions.

Michael Vaughan: "This is the greatest outfield catch I've ever seen. Flying Aarav has arrived."

Harsha Bhogle: "Jadeja tossed it up, Warner middled it, but Aarav decided to defy gravity. What a moment!"

ICC Official Twitter: "We've seen Superman. We've seen Spiderman. But have you ever seen FLYING AARAV?"

Even Sachin Tendulkar tweeted: "Incredible athleticism! What a catch, Aarav! This is why cricket is a great sport."