

Cricket 128

Chapter 128

The afternoon sun hung high in the sky as I prepared to leave for the stadium. It was the first day of our T20I series against Australia, and the excitement in the air was electric. Just as I was about to grab my kit bag and head out, my phone buzzed. It was Shraddha.

"Hey, Aarav! I have a surprise for you," her voice chimed through the speaker.

I grinned, intrigued. "A surprise? What is it?"

She chuckled. "Nope, not that easy. You'll only know if you end up as the highest scorer of the series."

I scoffed, shaking my head. "Hey, that's not easy, you know? Australia has some of the best bowlers."

"Yeah, yeah," she teased. "But I need it. So, you better make it happen."

I sighed dramatically. "Fine! I'll try my best. But this better be a good surprise."

She laughed. "Trust me, it is! Alright, go smash some sixes. See you soon!"

With that, she hung up, leaving me curious yet determined. A challenge was set, and now, I had extra motivation to perform. I grabbed my bag and made my way to the stadium.

Arriving at the ground, the team was already buzzing with energy. The nets were up, and players were warming up in different drills. Today, we were practicing on the third pitch, and I had one clear goal in mind—smash big and go huge!

I padded up and walked towards the nets. As I picked up my bat, Mohammad Shami, Ravindra Jadeja, and Yuzvendra Chahal were already preparing to bowl. They had decided to rotate after every ball—one delivery from Shami, then Jadeja, then Chahal. This was going to be interesting.

Shami stepped up first. His sharp pace and seam movement were always a challenge, but I was in no mood to hold back. The first ball, pitched short, came at me quickly. I adjusted my stance and rocked back, pulling it fiercely over deep mid-wicket. The sound of the bat meeting the ball echoed across the ground as it soared over the fence.

"Whoa! That was massive!" KL Rahul shouted from the other net.

Jadeja grinned as he grabbed the ball. "Let's see how you handle my spin, Aarav!"

He bowled a quick delivery, angling in from over the wicket. I stepped out, got underneath it, and lofted it straight down the ground. Another clean six!

Chahal smirked as he took his mark. "Alright, time for some trickery. Let's see if you can read this one."

He tossed up a beautiful leg-spinner that drifted and dipped. I spotted the variation and waited till the last moment before unleashing a reverse sweep. The ball flew past the diving point fielder and raced to the boundary.

The team erupted in cheers. "Man, Aarav is in beast mode today!" Hardik Pandya called out, laughing.

The session continued for thirty minutes. I was completely in the zone, seeing the ball like a beach ball. I mixed my shots—some orthodox, some outright ridiculous. A scoop over fine leg off Shami, an inside-out loft over covers against Jadeja, and a brutal slog sweep against Chahal that cleared the practice facility.

By the end of the session, we had lost three balls—two courtesy of my monstrous sixes off Chahal and one that I launched against Shami.

"That's it! No more bowling to you!" Chahal joked, throwing up his hands. "We're running out of balls!"

"And out of bowlers' confidence too!" Rohit Sharma added, grinning.

Shami patted my back. "You're hitting clean, man. Keep this up, and we'll have no trouble in the series."

I nodded, feeling pumped. "Gotta keep the form going. And, well, I have an extra incentive now."

"Oh? What's that?" Jadeja raised an eyebrow.

I smirked. "A surprise from friend, but only if I become the highest scorer in the series."

The team burst into laughter.

With the session done, we wrapped up and headed back to the dressing room. My hands were sore, but my heart was light. The series was just beginning, but the fire within me had already been ignited. Now, all that was left was to take this momentum into the match and prove myself on the big stage.

Inside the dressing room, the energy was still high. The coach walked in with a smile. "Good hitting, Aarav. If you bat like this in the actual game, we'll be in a great position."

I nodded. "Feeling good today. Just need to carry this rhythm forward."

Hardik clapped me on the back. "Man, I still can't believe you hit that reverse sweep off Chahal. That was insane!"

"I was trying something new," I admitted. "Figured I might as well push my limits in practice."

Shami shook his head, grinning. "Pushing limits? More like setting new ones. The way you're hitting, even Bumrah might have trouble stopping you!"

"I don't know about that," I laughed. "Bumrah's workers are something else."

As we changed out of our training gear, I could feel the anticipation for the series settling in. The challenge from Shraddha was at the back of my mind, but my main focus was now on the first match. Australia was a tough opponent, and I needed to be at my absolute best.

The practice session had been intense, and after pushing our limits in the nets, we finally got a breather. We had a 20-minute rest, sitting in the dugout, hydrating ourselves, and mentally preparing for the big match ahead. The sun was beginning to set, casting a golden glow over the stadium as the stands started filling up with enthusiastic fans. The energy in the air was electrifying. The sound of drums, cheers, and occasional chants echoed through the stadium, reminding us that the battle was about to begin. This was the kind of atmosphere cricketers lived for.

The moment of toss arrived. Both captains, Virat Kohli and Aaron Finch, walked to the center for the toss. The entire team watched intently as the coin was flipped into the air. The stadium fell silent for a brief second before the match referee announced, "Australia wins the toss and elects to bowl first!"

A mix of emotions filled our dugout. Batting first had its own challenges, especially against Australia's lethal bowling attack, but it also meant we had the chance to set a formidable target. The discussion in the dugout immediately started. Shreyas and Hardik debated about the possible total we should aim for, while Rohit and KL quietly strategized about the first few overs.

Virat stepped forward for the customary post-toss interaction with the broadcaster. He confidently laid out our playing XI:

"We've got KL Rahul and Rohit Sharma as our openers. Then it's me, Aarav, Rishabh Pant, Shreyas Iyer, Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Yuzvendra Chahal, Mohammad Shami, and Jasprit Bumrah. It's a solid team, and we're looking forward to putting up a strong performance today."

As the openers prepared to head to the crease, I turned to Virat bhaiya. "Bhaiya, I have a request. If we lose a wicket in the powerplay, can I go in at number three?"

Virat looked at me, considering my words carefully. "Why do you want to go in so early? Usually, I take that spot."

I took a deep breath. "I've been feeling really good in practice, and I want to take on their bowlers during the fielding restrictions. I think I can dominate if I get in early."

He nodded, still thinking it over. "It's a big call, Aarav. But I like your confidence. If we lose a wicket inside the first six overs, you go in. Just make sure you make it count."

I grinned. "I won't let you down, bhaiya."

Shreyas overheard the conversation and chuckled. "Looks like someone's hungry for runs today! Better not waste this chance, Aarav."

"Don't worry, Shreyas bhai, I've got this!"

Virat placed a firm hand on my shoulder before heading out to the balcony to oversee the start of the innings. The match had officially begun.

As Rohit and KL walked out to the middle, I took a deep breath, focusing on the game ahead. The stadium roared as the Australian bowlers marked their run-up. The first ball was about to be bowled, and the match had officially begun.

Mitchell Starc took the new ball, steaming in with his aggressive pace. He bowled a full, swinging delivery to Rohit, who carefully defended it with soft hands. A cautious start, but we knew an onslaught was coming. The next few deliveries were a mix of well-placed drives and strategic leaves.

In the dugout, we were glued to every delivery. The game had started, but for me, the real moment would arrive when I walked in to bat. My fingers unconsciously tapped against my pads, my heartbeat

steady yet eager. The crowd's cheers, the calls from the fielders, and the sound of the bat meeting the ball all blended into an orchestra of anticipation.

The match was underway, and destiny was waiting to be written.

The crowd held its breath as the umpire raised his finger. Rohit Sharma was gone for 21 in the first ball of the fourth over. A well-disguised delivery from Adam Zampa trapped him leg-before-wicket, and despite a brief contemplation, Rohit decided against taking the review. India was now 46/1.

Aarav Walks In at No. 3

The murmurs in the stands grew louder, and even the commentators seemed taken aback as it wasn't Virat Kohli walking in at number three, but me, Aarav Pathak.

Ian Smith: "Well, well, well! That's a surprise. It's not Virat Kohli, the man who has owned this number three spot for so many years, but instead, young Aarav Pathak stepping onto the pitch. What a moment for this lad!"

Harsha Bhogle: "Oh, this is fascinating! Kohli stepping aside for Aarav means the youngster must be in top form and extremely confident. This is a huge opportunity for him. Can he make it count?"

Taking my guard, I tapped my bat against the pitch, making sure my leg stump was covered. The atmosphere was electrifying. Before taking my stance, KL Rahul walked up to me with a knowing smile.

Rahul: "You at number three? Didn't expect that."

Aarav: "Yeah, bhaiya. Feeling good today. I think it's going to be a big game for me."

Rahul: "Go for it! My support is with you—hit big."

We touched our bats in a quick gesture of camaraderie, and I took my place at the crease. I could hear the Australian fielders whispering among themselves, trying to adjust their field placements. Zampa stood at the top of his mark, ready to deliver his second ball of the over.

Ball 2: Zampa flighted one on my leg stump. Instinctively, I went down on one knee and executed a clean, textbook sweep shot. The ball rocketed over the square leg boundary, landing deep into the crowd.

Ian Smith: "Oh, what a shot! That's magnificent! First ball faced, and he's just dismissed it like a club-level delivery! Aarav Pathak, take a bow!"

Harsha Bhogle: "Well, if that doesn't send a message, I don't know what will!"

The confidence surged within me. The roar of the crowd was deafening. I took a deep breath and focused on the next delivery.

Ball 3: Zampa, trying to counter, tossed the next one up, expecting me to stay back. But I was already on the move. A quick step forward, my bat met the ball in the sweetest part, and it soared over long-on for another six. The bowler stood motionless, watching the ball disappear.

Ian Smith: "And he's gone again! This one's even bigger! He's taken the aggressive route, and my word, it's working!"

Harsha Bhogle: "You can't take your eyes off this! That's confidence. That's sheer intent."

Ball 4: Now, Zampa shortened his length, but I anticipated it. Moving onto the back foot, I opened my stance slightly and played a gorgeous inside-out shot over extra cover. The timing was perfect, and the ball raced to the boundary ropes.

Ian Smith: "Glorious! Absolutely glorious! It's a stroke of elegance! He makes it look so easy."

Harsha Bhogle: "This is an exhibition of fearless cricket! Aarav Pathak has arrived on the international stage!"

Ball 5: Frustration crept onto Zampa's face. He darted one on my pads, hoping to cramp me. But I was ready. A gentle flick of the wrists, and the ball sped away past fine leg for four more.

Ian Smith: "Everything he touches is turning into gold! Zampa has no answers right now."

Harsha Bhogle: "He's reading the bowler like a book! This is something special."

Ball 6: Expecting another flick, Zampa went fuller and outside off. But I had a trick up my sleeve. I quickly shuffled across, crouched slightly, and executed a perfectly timed reverse scoop. The ball sailed over the keeper's head and crashed into the boundary.

Ian Smith: "Oh, stop it! Stop it! This is outrageous! A reverse scoop against a leg-spinner? Are you kidding me?"

Harsha Bhogle: "That's just insane! The confidence, the execution—this is a dream start for the young man. Six balls, twenty-four runs, and what a way to announce yourself in the game!"

End of Over Update

With that incredible display, the scoreboard flashed: India 70/1 after 5 overs.

My score? 24 off just 5 balls.

I took a deep breath, soaking in the atmosphere. The pressure of the big stage had melted away. I had stepped in, taken charge, and shown my intent. But this was just the beginning. The match was still young, and I was far from finished.

I looked over at the dressing room, and Virat bhaiya gave me a nod of approval, a slight smile playing on his lips. I had made a statement. Now, it was time to carry on and make this innings unforgettable.

I turned back towards the pitch as Pat Cummins marked his run-up. The fielders spread out a little, showing respect for my aggressive play. Rahul gave me a fist bump and whispered, "No mercy, keep going." I grinned.

The battle had just begun.

Mitchell Starc came for the next over.

KL Rahul was on strike. He faced the first delivery and managed to push it towards mid-wicket, scurrying for a quick single. That brought me back on strike.

I adjusted my gloves, took a deep breath, and tapped my bat on the pitch.

Ball 2: straight, and quick.

Without a second thought, I stepped back, transferring my weight onto my back foot. My eyes locked onto the ball as it rose to chest height. With a firm stance, I unleashed a picture-perfect straight shot for a six, holding my pose as the ball raised high in the air. The timing was exquisite, and the ball raced high to the boundary for a six.

Ian Smith (commentary): "Hold the pose, Aarav Pathak! Hold the pose!!! What a shot! What is this carnage?! Absolutely amazing! It's as if he's carved that with a golden blade!"

Harsha Bhogle: "Oh, the elegance, the sheer precision! That is what you call a fantastic shot! Starc tried to beat him with pace, but Aarav is in another league right now!"

The Australian fielders exchanged frustrated glances. Starc wiped his face, took a deep breath, and returned to his mark.

Ball 3:

Starc runs in again. This time, it's an off-cutter, landing just short of a good length.

I shuffled slightly forward, keeping my balance, but Starc had done his homework. The ball gripped the surface and held its line. I adjusted at the last second, but the ball thudded into my pad before rolling towards the keeper.

A dot ball.

Ian Smith: "That's a smart one from Starc! He saw Aarav moving early and took the pace off. A little victory for the bowler there!"

Harsha Bhogle: "Good comeback! Starc needed this. He's not going to give up without a fight."

I nodded, acknowledging the bowler's brilliance. But the battle wasn't over.

Ball 4:

Starc fires in a wide yorker.

I read it early, knowing I had no room for a conventional shot. Instinct took over. I crouched low, shifting my weight slightly backward, and at the very last moment, I opened the bat face and scooped the ball behind the wicketkeeper.

The ball soared over his head, clearing the boundary in a blink.

Ian Smith: "OH MY WORD! WHAT DID WE JUST WITNESS?! This is not cricket; this is artistry! Is this AB de Villiers reincarnate?! Aarav Pathak, take a bow!"

Harsha Bhogle: "Just stop it! Stop it! This is outrageous! That is pure instinct, pure brilliance! The audacity to play that shot against a world-class bowler like Starc? My goodness!"

I grinned, looking up at the dressing room. Virat bhaiya clapped, and everyone shouting!

Ball 5:

Starc now changes his approach, opting for a short ball at my body.

I was ready.

The moment the ball left his hand, I picked up the length. My feet moved instinctively—back, across, and slightly open. I rocked onto my back foot, bringing my bat high over my shoulders, eyes locked on the ball.

Then came the pull.

My wrists snapped through the ball, and it launched off my bat, flying over deep third man. The connection was so pure that the moment it left the bat, I knew where it was going.

Ian Smith: "OH HO HO! STOP IT! This is vintage! It's Ricky Ponting reborn! What a pull shot! That's gone into the night sky and out of the park!"

Harsha Bhogle: "You don't teach this. You're born with it! What a sensational shot! That is a proper, world-class pull!"

Ball 6:

Starc goes full, targeting the base of my stumps.

I jammed my bat down, squeezing it past mid-wicket. Rahul, at the non-striker's end, was already charging. We sprinted for one. I turned quickly, knowing there was a second run in it. We pushed hard, diving into the crease just as the fielder's throw came in.

The umpire signaled two runs. A brilliant end to the over.

Ian Smith: "And they run two! That's top-class awareness!"

India-> 92/1

Aarav-> 44(10) *

Well, taking rest and writing chapters, till i black-out, so keep enjoying!

and tell me who are you supporting this IPL season!