

Cricket 129

Chapter 129

India: 92/1 after the powerplay. Aarav Pathak: 44(10)*

The powerplay had ended, and I stood at the non-striker's end, still catching my breath from the whirlwind of the last few overs. The crowd's energy was palpable, a roaring sea of blue that fed my adrenaline. But now, with the field restrictions lifted, the real battle was about to begin.

Josh Hazlewood took the ball for Australia. Tall, relentless, and one of the best in the world. A true challenge.

Ball 0: Wide and missed!

A loose delivery by Hazlewood, missed by keeper, ran for one run.

Now Aarav on strike!

Hazlewood's run-up was smooth, measured. He charged in, his eyes locked onto me.

Ball 1:

The first delivery was full, tailing in slightly to my pads. Instinct took over. My front foot pressed forward, bat angled just right, and I whipped the ball over deep square leg with a perfectly timed flick. It soared into the stands, and for a moment, I just stood there, watching it disappear.

The stadium erupted. The screens flashed FIFTY FOR AARAV PATHAK!

Ian Smith: "Oh my goodness! That's fifty up for this young sensation! He flicked it with ease, just a turn of the wrists, and it's gone the distance! What a way to reach to your fifty!"

Harsha Bhogle: "It's as if he has all the time in the world! The placement, the elegance, and the sheer power in that shot—this is something special! Fifty in just 11 balls. You can sense the panic in the Australian camp now. The Fastest 50 in the International T20Is."

I ran, jumped in excitement, and raised my bat to acknowledge the roaring crowd. I turned towards the dressing room—Virat bhai was on his feet, clapping, a proud smile on his face. Rohit bhai gave me a thumbs-up. The support from my teammates sent a surge of confidence through me.

KL walked up, punching my glove.

KL Rahul: "Fifty off eleven? What are you eating, yaar? Save some of that energy for the later overs!"

I laughed. "Bhaiya, I don't plan on stopping anytime soon."

Hazlewood walked back to his mark, visibly unfazed. But I saw the Australians adjusting their field. A deep mid-wicket was in place now, and the square leg fielder had moved to the boundary. They weren't going to let me flick them again. Fine. Time for something else.

Ball 2-6:

The next delivery was on a hard length outside off. No room for fireworks. I punched it gently to deep point and jogged a single. KL took strike now.

Ball after ball, we worked the gaps. Singles and quick running between the wickets. Hazlewood's pace wasn't easy to counter, but we kept the scoreboard ticking.

Ball 3: KL nudged it to cover. Single.

Ball 4: A backfoot punch from me to third man. Another run.

Ball 5: A slower delivery, KL flicked it to mid-wicket. One more.

Ball 6: A short-of-a-length ball, I guided it towards fine leg, running hard for one.

A solid over for us—12 runs from it, without taking unnecessary risks.

End of Over Update:

India: 104/1 (7 overs) Aarav Pathak: 53(14)*

Drinks Break

I walked to the other end, taking my helmet off briefly. KL walked up beside me, patting my back.

KL Rahul: "Good over. Kept it ticking. No pressure on us."

I nodded. "They're changing the field again. Looks like they're setting up something big."

And then, I saw it. The Australian team huddled together near the boundary. A rare sight this early in the innings.

Maxwell, Finch, Warner, and Cummins were deep in discussion. Hands moving animatedly, pointing towards different areas on the field, glancing at me in between.

A deep fielder at third man, another square leg on the boundary, mid-off pushed back. They were planning something specific for me.

I took a long sip from my water bottle, watching the Australians strategize. They were feeling the heat. For a moment, I could see the pressure in their faces, the urgency in their conversations.

Meanwhile, I leaned against my bat, laughing with KL bhai.

KL Rahul: "Looks like they're forming a war strategy for you. Maxwell seems very stressed."

I smirked. "Let them strategize. We'll just keep playing our game."

The drinks break continued, but I knew the battle had only just begun.

The stadium was electric. Fans were on their feet, waving flags, chanting my name. The scoreboard flashed:

India: 104/1 (7 overs)

*Aarav Pathak: 53(14)

I stood at the crease, breathing heavily, my heart pounding with the adrenaline rush. The Australian players were visibly tense. I could see Maxwell having a quick chat with Finch and Warner. Their body language screamed frustration. But for me, this was just the beginning.

The 13th Over – A Historic Moment

Maxwell came into the attack. I adjusted my stance, analyzing the field. The off-side was packed, and I knew they expected me to go for a big lofted drive. But I had other plans.

He tossed up a delivery, just outside off-stump. Without hesitation, I got into position and executed a perfect reverse sweep—the ball soared over the third man boundary, landing deep into the stands.

The crowd erupted. SIX!

I stood there for a second, watching the ball disappear. Then, I looked up at the giant screen flashing a milestone:

Aarav Pathak – 100 off 35 balls!

I had just equaled Rohit Sharma's record for the fastest T20I century by an Indian.

I removed my helmet and bowed towards the crowd like a gentleman (Shubhan Gill like celebration)—acknowledging their unwavering support. It was my moment, and I wanted to savor it. My teammates in the dugout were on their feet, clapping, cheering, celebrating with me. Virat, Pandya, KL, and even Rahul Dravid stood up to acknowledge the knock.

The broadcasters replayed my shots, each boundary dissected with admiration.

Ian Smith: "HE HAS ARRIVED! AARAV PATHAK, REMEMBER THE NAME! A century of sheer brilliance! He's not just playing; he's dominating!"

Harsha Bhogle: "Unbelievable! What a knock! The elegance, the power, the precision—Aarav Pathak is writing history right now."

I took a deep breath. My bat felt lighter. The pressure was off. Now, it was about accelerating further.

The Onslaught Continues

India was now at 198/1 after 13 overs. KL Rahul was playing his role perfectly, rotating the strike and ensuring I got the maximum deliveries. The Aussies were shattered; their body language spoke volumes.

14.4 Over –

Pat Cummins ran in. The ball pitched just outside off, short of a length. My instincts took over. I swung my bat with full force, aiming to send it into the second tier. But then—

A faint edge.

Mathew Wade dived to his right and took a clean catch.

Silence.

Then, the Australian team roared.

I stood still, heart sinking for a moment. The umpire raised his finger. I looked at the scoreboard—112 runs off just 41 balls.

As I walked back to the pavilion, the crowd gave me a standing ovation.

Ian Smith: "WHAT A KNOCK! Aarav Pathak, take a bow! This young man has just played one of the finest innings you'll ever see in T20 cricket."

Harsha Bhogle: "If you weren't watching, you've missed something special. This is the stuff of legends. This is Aarav Pathak!"

I raised my bat one last time towards the crowd before stepping into the dugout. My teammates hugged me, Virat patting my back, Rohit Sharma grinning ear to ear.

The Final Overs and the Grand Total

Despite my departure, the momentum never dropped. The last five overs saw Pandya stepping in and launching a brutal assault on the Aussie bowlers. Virat, with his trademark finesse, found gaps and accelerated the innings alongside Iyer and Pant.

Boundaries rained. A flurry of sixes soared into the night sky. The Aussies tried everything—bouncers, wide yorkers, even slower deliveries—but nothing could stop the Indian batting juggernaut. Cummins and Starc looked deflated, Warner had his hands on his hips, and Maxwell shook his head in disbelief.

By the time 20 overs were completed, the scoreboard read:

India: 260/5

KL finished with a well-compiled 59 off 41, Pandya's cameo added a blistering 32 off 12, and Virat and Pant chipped in with crucial runs.

The Indian dressing room was all smiles. High-fives, pats on the back, and an overwhelming sense of achievement filled the air. I sat down, still absorbing everything that had happened. This was my night, my moment—a century that would be remembered forever.

The Innings Break

As I sat with a towel around my shoulders, sipping on an energy drink, I glanced up at the giant screen displaying my innings: 112 off 41 balls, 9 fours, 8 sixes.

Ian Smith: "Aarav Pathak has announced himself on the grandest stage. This is power-hitting at its absolute finest."

Harsha Bhogle: "We've seen some magical innings over the years, but this one... this is up there with the very best."

Social media exploded. My phone buzzed relentlessly. Messages poured in—former cricketers, commentators, celebrities, and fans from across the world hailed my innings. Hashtags like #AaravPathakCentury, #RememberTheName, and #Fastest100 trended globally.

The Australian camp looked deflated. Maxwell and Finch had their hands on their heads, while Cummins, despite his efforts, seemed out of ideas.

I smiled to myself. Tonight, I had etched my name in the history books. And this was just the beginning.

The floodlights beamed down as we took the field, ready to defend our massive total of 260. The roar of the crowd was deafening, the energy pulsating through the stadium. I jogged to my bowling mark alongside Jasprit Bumrah, both of us eager to make early inroads into the Australian batting lineup.

Bumrah charged in for the first over, his eyes locked on David Warner, the Australian opener. A couple of fiery deliveries kept Warner in check before he managed to flick one for a boundary. But we knew it was only a matter of time before we struck.

Then came the 4th over. I gripped the ball tightly, focusing on my rhythm. Aaron Finch, Australia's captain, stood at the crease, looking to accelerate. I ran in, delivered an in-swinging delivery that pitched on off and darted back in sharply. Finch misjudged the movement, played all around it, and the stumps were shattered!

Bowled! The crowd erupted. I let out a roar, pumping my fist in celebration. My teammates rushed to congratulate me. The breakthrough had come at the perfect time.

In the 6th over, Mohammad Shami joined the attack. Mitchell Marsh, who was looking dangerous, attempted an aggressive shot over mid-on. But he mistimed it, sending a simple catch to long-on. OUT!

At the end of the powerplay, Australia was struggling at 58/2.

With the field spread out, we applied more pressure. Yuzvendra Chahal came into the attack and struck immediately, deceiving Glenn Maxwell with a beautiful leg-break that crashed into the stumps. Maxwell gone!

Meanwhile, Bumrah was relentless. He returned for his second spell and removed both Marcus Stoinis and Tim David in quick succession. His yorkers were unplayable, zipping through at extreme pace. By the time the 15th over ended, Australia was reeling at 140/6.

I returned to bowl my final over and struck again. This time, it was Mathew Wade, who attempted to scoop but misread the pace. The ball clipped the off stump, sending the bails flying. Aarav strikes again!

Australia managed a few big hits in the final overs, with Pat Cummins swinging his bat freely. However, Bumrah came back to finish things off in style. He bowled an exceptional final over, picking up his fourth wicket, trapping Starc LBW.

At the end of 20 overs, Australia had managed 204/9.

Bowling Figures:

Aarav Pathak – 4 overs, 2 wickets for 28 runs

Jasprit Bumrah – 4 overs, 4 wickets for 32 runs

Yuzvendra Chahal – 3 wickets

Mohammad Shami – 1 wicket Post-Match Celebrations

The final ball was bowled, and we erupted in celebration. A dominant performance had secured a massive victory. As we shook hands with the Australian players, the stadium announcer's voice echoed through the speakers:

"The Player of the Match award goes to... Aarav Pathak!"

I walked up to the podium amidst loud cheers, receiving the trophy from the match officials. The adrenaline was still coursing through my veins as I stood beside Harsha Bhogle for the post-match interview.

Harsha Bhogle: "Aarav, what a phenomenal knock! Scoring a century in just 35 balls in a T20I is no small feat. Can you take us through your thought process during that innings?"

Aarav: "Thank you, Harsha! Honestly, it was just about staying in the moment. I didn't think about the records; I was just reacting to the ball and backing my instincts. Once I got going, I felt really confident, and KL at the other end kept encouraging me to keep pushing. It was a special night!"

Harsha Bhogle: "You've been in amazing form lately. What has been the key to your consistency and performance?"

Aarav: "It's been a lot of hard work behind the scenes, practicing different match scenarios, and keeping my mindset positive. The support from my teammates and coaches has been incredible, and that gives me the freedom to express myself on the field."

Harsha Bhogle: "This performance will go down as one of the most memorable in T20 cricket. Does it feel extra special to do this against a team like Australia?"

Aarav: "Absolutely! Australia is one of the toughest teams in the world, and they never give up. To perform against them on such a big stage makes it even more special. But more than personal milestones, I'm happy that my performance contributed to a big team win. That's what matters most!"

Harsha Bhogle: "And of course, let's talk about your bowling. Two crucial wickets, including Finch! How satisfying was that?"

Aarav: "Oh, it felt great! Bowling is something I've worked on a lot, and getting a key wicket like Finch early on really set the tone for our defense. Credit to Bumrah, Chahal, and the rest of the bowlers for keeping the pressure on throughout."

The crowd erupted again as I lifted the Player of the Match trophy high, soaking in the moment. Tonight was special, but I knew this was just the beginning.