

KING OF CRICKET

Chapter 14: The Bowling Battle

The blazing sun had softened into a golden glow by the time our team took the field for the second innings. With 223 runs on the board, we had set a daunting target, but I knew cricket was a game of uncertainties. Every run mattered, and every ball had to count.

I huddled my team together. "We've done the hard work with the bat, but now it's time to finish the job. Bowl smart, keep your lines tight, and don't give away extras," I said, scanning each of my teammates. Their determined nods assured me they were ready.

Aniket opened the attack. His pace was sharp, and his line was impeccable. The first over was a mix of ferocious deliveries:

Ball 1: A fiery outswinger that just kissed the edge of the bat and went to the keeper. No run.

Ball 2: A bouncer that forced the batter to duck under it. The fielders clapped, appreciating the aggression.

Ball 3: A fuller delivery on middle stump. The batter flicked it for a single.

Ball 4: A slow yorker that deceived the batter completely but missed the stumps by a whisker.

Ball 5 and 6: Tight deliveries, each resulting in just one run.

Aniket had set the tone, conceding only three runs in the first over.

Yash came in next with his off-spin. His first two balls were tightly bowled, forcing the batters to play defensively. But the opposition's intent soon became clear—they weren't here just to survive.

On the third ball, their opener launched Yash straight over long-on for a six. The crowd erupted, and I signaled to Yash to keep calm. He adjusted his line,

tossing the next delivery wider. The batter, tempted, tried to cut it but only managed an edge that sped to third man for four.

Yash recovered brilliantly, finishing the over with two dot balls. The pressure was on.

Karan and Arjun, our medium pacers, took over the middle overs. Karan struck in his very first over, removing their number three with a deceptive slower ball that shattered the stumps.

Arjun followed up with disciplined bowling, keeping the opposition's run rate in check. He induced a crucial false shot from their most aggressive batter, sending a high catch to Yash at deep mid-wicket.

Abhishek, our all-rounder, bowled a tidy spell, dismissing another key player with a well-directed yorker that clipped the base of off-stump.

By the 15th over, the opposition needed 70 runs with five wickets in hand. I came to bowl this over. I took a deep breath, adjusted my grip, and focused.

First Over:

The first delivery was a quick, inswinging yorker. The batter managed to dig it out, but it was too fast for a run.

The second ball was a bouncer, and the batter mistimed the pull, sending it straight into the hands of Aniket at square leg. A wicket!

I kept the pressure on, conceding only three runs in the over.

The match had reached its climax. The opposition needed 13 runs from the last six balls, with their last recognized batter still at the crease. I decided to take the responsibility of bowling the final over.

Ball 1:

A full-length delivery aimed at the base of off-stump. The batter connected, sending it straight down the ground for four. The crowd roared. 9 runs needed off 5 balls.

Ball 2:

I adjusted my line, bowling a slower ball outside off. The batter swung hard but missed. The ball thudded into the keeper's gloves. 9 runs needed off 4 balls.

Ball 3:

A bouncer. The batter tried to hook but only managed a top edge that sailed high. Rahul at fine leg sprinted in and dived forward to take an incredible catch. The crowd erupted as the danger man was gone.

Ball 4:

A new batter on strike. I bowled a yorker that was dug out for a quick single. 8 runs needed off 2 balls.

Ball 5:

Another yorker, but the batter flicked it delicately past square leg for two runs. 6 runs needed off the final ball.

The tension was palpable. Fielders edged closer to the boundary ropes, ready to save every run. The batter prepared himself, his eyes locked on me.

I ran in, releasing a slower ball that pitched just short of a length. The batter swung with all his might, but the timing was off. The ball went high into the air, towards long-off.

For a moment, it felt like the world had frozen. Aniket stationed under the ball, hands steady. As the ball descended, he cupped it securely, and the stadium erupted in cheers.

We had won by five runs. My teammates rushed toward me, cheering and celebrating. Coach Ashwin clapped from the sidelines, a proud smile on his face.

"This is how you lead, Aarav," he said as he patted my shoulder.

The match was ours, but more importantly, it was a testament to our teamwork, skill, and determination.