

## Cricket 144

### Chapter 144

The atmosphere was electric at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium due to only electricity flowing through it. The long-awaited moment had arrived—the first match for Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) and Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in the IPL 2020 season. Social media was buzzing, with Aarav Pathak's recent statement still making waves.

As the two teams walked out for the toss, cameras focused on Virat Kohli and David Warner, two captains carrying immense responsibility on their shoulders.

#### Toss Time

The players gathered in the center, the massive stadium lights illuminating the pitch.

Murali Kartik: "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Match 3 of IPL 2021! It's RCB vs. SRH, a highly anticipated clash. We are moments away from the toss. Joining me for the toss, we have RCB captain Virat Kohli, SRH captain David Warner, and match referee Javagal Srinath. Virat, you'll spin the coin. David, your call?"

David Warner: "Tails."

Murali Kartik: "It's tails! Sunrisers Hyderabad have won the toss. David, what's the decision?"

David Warner: "We will field first. The pitch looks good, but with the humidity, dew might come into play later, so we'd rather chase."

Murali Kartik: "Alright, David. What's your team combination for today?"

David Warner: "We are going in with two spinners and three pacers. We feel this balance gives us the best chance."

Murali Kartik: "Thanks, David. Virat, if you had won the toss, what would you have done?"

Virat Kohli: "To be honest, I would have chosen to bat first anyway! We are confident about our batting lineup, and we're starting our campaign today with full belief that we will win this title. The energy in the dugout is high, and we are backing Aarav after his statement that's making waves on social media. The team believes in him, and we're ready to go."

Murali Kartik: "Great to hear, Virat. What's your combination for today's game?"

Virat Kohli: "We are playing two spinners and three pacers, looking for a balanced attack."

Murali Kartik: "Thank you, Virat. Wishing both teams the best of luck! Back to the commentary box."

Up in the commentary box, Jatin Sapru, Harsha Bhogle, Sunil Gavaskar, Matthew Hayden, and Murali Kartik discussed the upcoming battle.

Jatin Sapru: "So, gentlemen, a cracking match ahead! RCB will be batting first. Harsha, your thoughts?"

Harsha Bhogle: "Well, it's a bold call for RCB to want to bat first. They have the firepower—Virat, AB de Villiers, Finch, and the much-talked-about Aarav Pathak. But SRH's bowling attack is solid, led by Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Rashid Khan. This will be a great contest!"

Sunil Gavaskar: "Absolutely, Harsha. I'm also eager to see how Aarav Pathak performs today. He has made a lot of noise off the field, but cricket is played on the pitch. Today, we will see if he can back up his words."

Matthew Hayden: "Well said, Sunny. And RCB will need a good start because the Dubai pitch can slow down as the game progresses. If they post a big total, it will put immense pressure on SRH."

The RCB players sat in the dugout, focused and determined. Aarav adjusted his pads, mentally preparing for the challenge ahead.

AB de Villiers: "You ready, kid? Big game today."

Aarav Pathak: "More than ever, AB. Time to let the bat do the talking."

Virat Kohli: "That's the spirit! Let's go out there and dominate."

RCB's Lineup: -

Virat Kohli (c)

Aron Finch ✈️

Aarav Pathak

AB de Villiers ✈️

Moeen Ali ✈️

Shivam Dube

Washington Sundar

Umesh Yadav

Dale Steyn ✈️

Mohammad Siraj

Yuzvendra Chahal

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The floodlights lit up the ground as thousands of fans at home, were glued to their screens.

RCB's openers, Aaron Finch and Virat Kohli, walked out to the middle, the weight of expectations heavy on their shoulders. Finch took guard as Bhuvneshwar Kumar prepared to bowl the first over of the match. The experienced pacer started with a disciplined over, conceding only 9 runs.

As the second over began, SRH introduced T Natarajan into the attack. Finch and Kohli rotated the strike well, playing risk-free shots while keeping the scoreboard ticking. The opening partnership was beginning to look solid when, in the fourth over, David Warner decided to take a gamble and handed the ball to the young left-arm spinner, Abhishek Sharma.

Abhishek Sharma started his over confidently, tossing the ball up. Finch, looking to attack, stepped forward and played a lofted shot. The ball soared into the night sky, but he didn't get the distance he wanted. Rashid Khan, stationed at mid-wicket, positioned himself under the ball and took a safe catch.

The scoreboard read 38/1. Finch shook his head in disappointment as he walked back towards the dugout. The SRH players huddled together, celebrating the crucial breakthrough.

The moment had arrived. I, Aarav Pathak, took a deep breath and stepped onto the field wearing my RCB jersey with the number 4 proudly displayed on my back. My multicolored shoes, red and white, adding a unique flair to my entry.

As I approached the pitch, Virat bhaiya welcomed me with a reassuring nod.

"The ball is coming onto the bat nicely, just play your natural game," he advised.

I nodded in response, our gloves meeting in a firm punch of solidarity. This was it. My moment to shine.

I took my position at the striker's end, marking my guard. Before Abhishek Sharma ran into bowl, I shared a quick exchange with him.

"Come on, Abhi, show me what you got!" I teased, grinning at my close friend.

Abhishek smirked. "I will show you the improvement I made in quarantine, bro!"

We both chuckled, but I knew he was serious. Abhishek had always been competitive, and he wasn't going to make it easy for me.

I adjusted my grip on the bat, took a deep breath, and got ready. The crowd's energy on the other side of the screen was electric. This was my time to prove myself.

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[Commentary Begins]

Jatin Sapru: "Welcome back, folks! What a start to this IPL 2020 match between RCB and SRH! The crowd may not be in the stands, but social media is exploding with excitement, and all eyes are on one man—Aarav Pathak! Walking in after Aaron Finch's dismissal, he's ready to show the world what he's made of!"

Harsha Bhogle: "And what a way to introduce himself! A first-ball wide, running away for four. Five runs without even touching the bat! That's the kind of presence he brings to the crease!"

Matthew Hayden: "You can feel the confidence! He's got that swagger about him, those multicolored shoes standing out, but most importantly, his footwork already looks sharp. And now, T Natarajan with the new over."

Ball 2: - one run, hitting from the front face of bat for one!

RCB Now at 47/1.

[Over 5 – T Natarajan to Aarav Pathak]

Ball 1:

Aarav's POV: I knew Natarajan would look for that tight off-stump line, so I premeditated a shuffle outside leg. As soon as I saw the length in my slot, I leaned into it, making sure my hands stayed firm but relaxed, guiding it perfectly past the infield.

FOUR! Harsha Bhogle: "Oh, what a stroke! Aarav shuffles outside off, creates room, and punches it with those lightning-quick hands through extra cover! Such crisp timing!"

Ball 2:

Aarav's POV: He pulled the length back slightly, so I adjusted by getting on top of the bounce. Soft hands, textbook forward defense. No need to take unnecessary risks this early.

No run. Sunil Gavaskar: "That's a good comeback by Natarajan! A tight delivery on off-stump, and Aarav respects it with a solid forward defense."



Ball 3:

Aarav's POV: This time, he bowled a shade fuller, right in the channel of uncertainty. I debated going after it but decided against it. Better to play the waiting game and pick the right ball.

No run. Matthew Hayden: "Look at his footwork! That initial trigger movement is helping him judge length so quickly. He's already thinking a step ahead!"

Ball 4:

Aarav's POV: The moment I saw the ball drop short, my instincts kicked in. I transferred my weight back instantly, picked up the bounce early, and BAM! Swung through the line cleanly—knew it was a six the moment it left my bat!

SIX! Jatin Sapru: "WHAT A SHOT! Aarav Pathak is on fire! A short-of-length delivery, and he has PULLED this one with sheer power! That's gone deep into the stands at long-on!"

Ball 5:

Aarav's POV: This was all about picking the length early. I knew Natarajan likes to hit that length, so I stepped forward slightly to meet it at the perfect point. Got underneath the ball, extended my arms fully, and BOOM—second tier!

SIX AGAIN! Harsha Bhogle: "OH MY WORD! INTO THE SECOND-TIER! That's a monster hit! Length ball, and Aarav just swings through it effortlessly! That sound off the bat—pure cricketing music!"

Ball 6:

Aarav's POV: After two sixes, it was important to rotate strike. Opened the bat face slightly, directed it away from the fielder, and sprinted across. Controlled aggression is the key!

Single. Murali Kartik: "Good awareness! He nudges it softly past short third man for a quick single. Strike rotation is key. RCB now at 64/1!"

[Over 6 – Bhuvneshwar Kumar to Aarav Pathak]

Ball 1:

Aarav's POV: This was a tough one—pitched way outside off. I had to stretch, and my bottom hand gave way, but I used my wrist to guide it past the infield. Sometimes, improvisation is key!

FOUR! Matthew Hayden: "One-handed brilliance! Bhuvi bowls full outside off, and Aarav reaches out, loses his bottom hand, but still times it to perfection! It races past cover!"

Ball 2:

Aarav's POV: I premeditated the slog sweep, crouched slightly, and exploded through the shot. Didn't overhit—just used my natural bat swing. The sweet sound of the bat told me it was gone!

SIX! Harsha Bhogle: "WHAT A SHOT! SLOG SWEEP OVER MID-WICKET! Bhuvnagar tossed it up, and Aarav just picks his spot and sends it flying!"

Ball 3:

Aarav's POV: I had already planned to take a single. Pushed it gently past the bowler and called early. Running between the wickets is just as important as hitting boundaries!

Single. Jatin Sapru: "Smart batting! After those big shots, he just pushes for a quick single to keep the scoreboard ticking."

[End of Powerplay – RCB 80/1]

Aarav - 29 runs in 10balls

Murali Kartik: "RCB has set a solid foundation! Aarav Pathak, take a bow! 36 off 9 balls—this is the kind of impact innings that can change games!"

Matthew Hayden: "The young man is showing maturity beyond his years! His footwork is exceptional, his shot selection is top-notch, and he's entertaining the fans in style!"

Jatin Sapru: "RCB fans, are you not entertained? Aarav Pathak is here, and he means business! The dream of lifting the IPL trophy looks alive and well!"

[Aarav Walks Back to the Non-Striker's End]

Aarav's POV: That was a dream start to my innings, but I know this is just the beginning. I glance up at the scoreboard—80/1. We've built momentum, but now it's time to keep the tempo going. Time to focus, breathe, and get ready for the next challenge!

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Jatin Sapru: "The powerplay is done, but the show has just begun! RCB sitting at 80 for 1, and all eyes are still on the young sensation, Aarav Pathak. 29 runs in just 10 balls, and now he faces his biggest challenge yet—none other than Rashid Khan!"

Harsha Bhogle: "This is the real test! Rashid Khan is one of the most dangerous spinners in world cricket. His variations, his control—batsmen have struggled against him. But Aarav Pathak, he looks in some form today! Can he take on Rashid?"

[Over 7 – Rashid Khan to Aarav Pathak]

Ball 1: Single. Harsha Bhogle: "Good start! Aarav gets forward, presses it softly towards point, and scampers through for a quick single. Smart batting!"

Aarav's POV: I knew Rashid would look for a tight line on off-stump. I stayed low, let the ball come to me, and just tapped it past the infield. No need to take risks early in the over. Get a feel for the spin first!

Ball 2: Kohli on strike. Matthew Hayden: "This is an interesting passage of play. Kohli and Aarav in the middle against Rashid Khan—two aggressive batsmen against a world-class spinner!"

{Ball 2,3 and 4 was played by Kohli}

Ball 5: SIX! Straight down the ground! Jatin Sapru: "That is HUGE! Aarav Pathak, take a bow! Rashid flighted it up, and Aarav said—thank you very much! Straight over the bowler's head for a magnificent six! That's confidence!"

Ball 6: SIX AGAIN! Swept over deep square-leg! Harsha Bhogle: "Ohhh my word! That's outrageous! An aerial sweep over deep square-leg! Aarav Pathak is putting on a masterclass! Rashid Khan can only watch as the ball sails into the stands!"

Jatin Sapru: "RCB now at 96 for 1! Aarav Pathak moves to 42 off just 13 balls. The youngster is on fire!"

[Over 8 – Sandeep Sharma to Aarav Pathak]

David Warner brings in Sandeep Sharma, looking for control. But can he stop this batting storm?

Ball 1: Kohli on strike, single taken. Matthew Hayden: "Smart from Kohli, taps it into the off-side and gets Aarav back on strike."

Ball 2: FOUR! Aarav is in the mood now! Harsha Bhogle: "That's class! Full on off-stump, and Aarav drives it straight down the ground! Majestic batting!"

Aarav's POV: Sandeep went full, so I adjusted my weight forward, brought my bat down straight, and followed through with a high elbow. No need to overhit—just perfect timing and placement.

Ball 3: No run. Sunil Gavaskar: "That's a great delivery! Just outside off, Aarav lets it go. Patience is key!"

Aarav's POV: That was a good length ball, slightly outside off. Thought about playing at it but trusted my technique and left it alone. Sometimes, restraint is just as important as aggression.

Ball 4: FOUR! Cut away past point! Jatin Sapru: "50 up for Aarav Pathak! What a knock this has been! Raises his bat, looks up to the sky—he knows this is special! The dugout is on their feet!"

Ball 5: No run. Murali Kartik: "Sandeep pulls back the length, Aarav plays it cautiously. Good battle!"

Ball 6: Single to keep strike! Harsha Bhogle: "Smart cricket! Aarav nudges it to mid-on and takes a quick run. Keeps the strike for the next over. RCB 106 for 1!"

Jatin Sapru: "What a player! Aarav Pathak, 51 off 18 balls. This is an innings to remember! The way he's handled Rashid Khan, the way he's found gaps—this is high-class batting!"

Matthew Hayden: "The best part? It's not just power hitting. His footwork, his shot selection—it's all coming together beautifully. This young man is playing like a seasoned pro!"

Harsha Bhogle: "And guess what? He's not done yet! The innings is still alive, and if he keeps going like this, we could be in for something historic! Buckle up, folks—this is turning into a masterclass!"

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Jatin Sapru: "We have just witnessed an absolute blitzkrieg from Aarav Pathak! 70 off just 26 balls, a masterclass in controlled aggression. But his innings came to an end in the 11th over, courtesy of Bhuvneshwar Kumar's deceiving slower ball. A well-judged catch by David Warner at long-on!"

Harsha Bhogle: "What an innings! Power, precision, and poise. Aarav took Rashid Khan apart and then continued his rampage. But Bhuvi, with all his experience, pulled out a beauty to send him back. A moment of brilliance!"

[Recap – Aarav's Dismissal]

Ball 5 of the 11th Over – Bhuvneshwar Kumar to Aarav Pathak

Harsha Bhogle: "Slower one... he's lofted it... is there a fielder there? YES, DAVID WARNER TAKES IT!  
Aarav Pathak walks back! End of a fantastic knock!"

Aarav's POV: I saw Bhuvi adjusting his fingers before the release. Expected a variation but mistimed the lofted shot. My bat turned slightly at the last moment, and that was enough to lose the sweet spot. As soon as I saw Warner settle under it, I knew I was done. Frustrating, but that's cricket!

Jatin Sapru: "RCB now at 148 for 2 in 11 overs. The foundation is set, but there's still work to be done!  
Enter AB de Villiers!"

Virat Kohli dismissed for 42 balls 56 runs 8 fours and 1 six at a strike rate of 133.33 to Rashid Khan!

[Over 12 – Rashid Khan to AB de Villiers]

Matthew Hayden: "This is a dream contest—Rashid Khan versus AB de Villiers! Two modern-day legends, one with the ball, the other with the bat. Rashid would want to make an impact here. Can AB take him on?"

Ball 1: Quick single.



Harsha Bhogle: "Just a tap to point and a quick single. Smart from Moeen Ali ."

Ball 2: SIX! Over extra cover!

Jatin Sapru: "Oh my word! Rashid tossed it up, and AB just leaned in and smoked it over extra cover! That's class!"

Ball 3: Dot ball.

Matthew Hayden: "Good comeback from Rashid! Fires this one in quicker, and AB just defends it. Rashid is fighting back!"

Ball 4: FOUR! Paddle sweep!

Harsha Bhogle: "Innovation at its finest! AB gets low and just paddles it fine. The field was up, and that's an easy boundary!"

Ball 5: Single.

Jatin Sapru: "AB rotating strike again. Brings Moeen Ali on strike. Rashid under pressure!"

[Over 15 – Sandeep Sharma to Moeen Ali]

Harsha Bhogle: "RCB at 180 for 3. They are looking to explode in the last five overs! Moeen Ali and AB de Villiers at the crease. The perfect duo for a late-overs assault!"

Ball 1: SIX! Moeen Ali cuts loose!

Matthew Hayden: "Oh, that is CRUNCHEd! Sandeep bowled a half-tracker, and Moeen was all over it! Rocked back and deposited it deep into the stands!"

Ball 2: FOUR! Elegant cover drive!

Harsha Bhogle: "What a shot! This isn't just hitting; this is art! Moeen Ali leans into a full ball and drives it through extra cover for four!"

Ball 3: Single.

Jatin Sapru: "Just a tap to mid-wicket and a quick single. Keeps the momentum going!"

Ball 4: FOUR! AB improvises!

Matthew Hayden: "Low full toss, and AB just opens the face of the bat! Third man was inside the circle, and he guides it past him! Another four!"

Ball 5: SIX! Ramp shot over fine leg!

Harsha Bhogle: "GENIUS! AB de Villiers sees the ball early and just ramps it over fine leg for six! This man is unreal!"

Ball 6: Single.

Jatin Sapru: "AB keeps strike for the next over. RCB 201 for 3 in 15 overs. The 200-run mark is breached, and we still have five overs left!"

[Final Over – Bhuvneshwar Kumar to Shivam Dube]

Jatin Sapru: "RCB at 226 for 5. Shivam Dube on strike. Can they push past 240?"

Ball 1: SIX! Monster hit!

Harsha Bhogle: "That is out of here! Slower ball, but Shivam Dube picks it and sends it 95 meters into the night sky!"

Ball 2: FOUR! Flicked off the pads!

Matthew Hayden: "Pure timing! Just a flick, and it races away past fine leg!"

Ball 3: Dot ball.

Harsha Bhogle: "Bhuvi finally gets a dot. Slower ball again, and Shivam just couldn't get under it!"

Ball 4: Single.

Jatin Sapru: "Drilled to long-on, just a single. Moeen Ali on strike!"

Ball 5: FOUR! Moeen Ali finishes in style!

Harsha Bhogle: "Wide yorker, but Moeen squeezes it through point! Four more runs!"

Ball 6: Single to finish!

Matthew Hayden: "A single to end the innings, and RCB have posted a mammoth 239 for 5! What a batting performance!"

[Post-Innings Analysis]

Jatin Sapru: "RCB, 239 for 5 in 20 overs! What a show! Aarav Pathak's explosive start, AB's finishing touches, and contributions from Moeen and Shivam Dube have given them a huge total!"

Harsha Bhogle: "Sunrisers have a mountain to climb! They need 240 to win. Can they pull off a miracle, or will RCB's bowlers shut them down? This chase is going to be intense!"