

## Cricket 146

### Chapter 146

The second match of RCB's IPL 2020 campaign had arrived, and the anticipation was electric. Their opponents: Kings XI Punjab. The captains walked onto the field for the toss.

Virat Kohli, exuding confidence, tossed the coin high into the night sky. KL Rahul, standing opposite him, called tails. The coin landed—heads!

"We'll bowl first!" Virat announced.

He turned towards his squad, clapping his hands.

"Alright boys, same strategy. Keep it tight in the powerplay, and let's restrict them to under 180."

The first over was entrusted to me. My plan was simple—maintain tight line and length, extract some early swing. I ran in with determination.

Over 1: Aarav Pathak

Ball 1: Good length, just outside off—dot ball.

Ball 2: Quick single by KL Rahul.

Ball 3: Swinging delivery, defended by Mayank Agarwal.

Ball 4: Short of length, Mayank punches it for two.

Ball 5: Yorker! Mayank just digs it out—dot ball.

Ball 6: A slower ball, flicked to square leg for a single.

End of Over 1: KXIP 4/0

Despite early wickets tumbling around him, KL Rahul was in god mode. Every delivery seemed to find the middle of his bat. In the 6th over, Chahal finally provided a breakthrough, clean bowling Mayank Agarwal for 26(20).

Virat shouted in joy, pumping his fists, "That's the way, Yuzi!"

By the 10th over, I was reintroduced into the attack. My main target: KL Rahul.

First two deliveries: Dot balls to Rahul, seaming away.

Third delivery: Edged! but Finch dropped the catch at first slip. I was livid, but held my emotions in check and the worst thing, they even ran for a single.

Fourth ball: Bowled! Nicholas Pooran tries to scoop but misses completely. OUT for 17(18).

Fifth ball: A deadly in-swinging yorker—Glen Maxwell trapped in front! LBW! Maxwell out for a golden duck!

Two wickets in the over! RCB players rushed toward me, patting my back. "Aarav, you beauty!" screamed AB de Villiers.

End of Over 10: KXIP 98/4

KL Rahul was the backbone of KXIP's innings, his strokes as elegant as they were destructive. He punished anything short, pierced gaps with precision, and lofted shots effortlessly over the fielders.

James Neesham and Karun Nair tried to steady the innings, rotating the strike while Rahul did the damage. By the 15th over, KXIP had reached 150/4, looking set for a massive score.

Then came the 17th over. I was handed the ball again. The equation was simple—break this partnership.

Over 17: Aarav Pathak

First ball: A dot. KL Rahul blocked it cautiously.

Second ball: A single to third man.

Third ball: Karun Nair swings—caught at long-on! OUT for 24(18).

The next three balls: Tight Yorkers, only five runs conceded.

By the time I did complete my 17th over, KL Rahul was at 99(69). He was unstoppable.

First ball—Yorker! James Neesham clean bowled!

Sarfaraz Khan walked in. We exchanged a quick stare.

Final over finished, and KXIP ended at 197/5 in 20 overs. KL Rahul, playing the innings of a lifetime, remained unbeaten at 112(74).

RCB had their target—198 to win. The pressure was on. Virat, AB, Aarav, and the rest of us padded up. The stadium (even though empty due to lockdown) felt alive with energy.

Virat turned to me and grinned, "Aarav, be ready. If needed, you'll finish this chase!"

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The stage was set for an exciting chase. Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) had to chase down 198 to secure their second consecutive victory. The openers, Aaron Finch and Virat Kohli, walked out with determination, knowing a strong start was necessary.

The first few overs were nothing short of a batting masterclass. Finch, in particular, was in beast mode. The Australian limited-overs captain showed why he was one of the most dangerous T20 batters in the world. He took on Sheldon Cottrell in the second over, smashing him for a massive six over long-off. Kohli, on the other hand, played his signature anchor role, rotating strike and ensuring no unnecessary risks were taken.

Commentator 1 (Harsha Bhogle): "Finch is looking dangerous here! He's decided that Cottrell is the man to target early on. RCB off to a flyer!"

Commentator 2 (Aakash Chopra): "Absolutely, Harsha! Kohli is doing what he does best—keeping things steady while allowing Finch to go berserk. It's a perfect T20 opening combination so far."

By the end of the powerplay, RCB was sitting comfortably at 60/0. The chase looked under control.

At 100/0 in 10 overs, RCB looked well on their way to victory. Finch had reached his fifty in just 30 balls, and Kohli was looking set. However, KL Rahul introduced leg-spinner Murugan Ashwin, and that's where everything changed.

Famous RCB fallout

11.4 Overs: Finch (59 off 36) – BOWLED!

Commentator 1: "OH, BOWLED HIM! Aaron Finch has been cleaned up! Ravi Bishnoi with a dream delivery!"

Bishnoi deceived Finch with a well-disguised googly that went straight through his defences. The off-stump went flying, and Punjab had their breakthrough. The young spinner let out a roar as he celebrated.

Kohli, ever the experienced campaigner, gestured to his partner Aarav Pathak at the other end, signaling to calm things down. But the collapse had just begun.

The Murugan Ashwin Show 13.1 Overs: Kohli (37 off 33) – LBW!

Murugan Ashwin struck gold with his very first delivery. It was a deceptive leg-break that spun sharply back in. Kohli misjudged the turn and played down the wrong line. The ball rapped him on the pads, and the umpire had no hesitation in raising his finger.

Commentator 2: "Oh my word, what a ball! Kohli is stunned. He thought it was missing, but the replay shows three reds! He's walking back shaking his head. Murugan Ashwin has turned this game on its head!"

The RCB skipper reviewed the decision in frustration, but the third umpire upheld the on-field call. The crowd, though limited in numbers, erupted in excitement.

#### 14.5 Overs: Aarav Pathak (39 off 25) – CAUGHT & BOWLED!

Ashwin's magic continued. Aarav Pathak, who had been striking the ball beautifully, attempted an aggressive shot. He mistimed a flighted delivery and ended up giving a simple return catch to Mayank Aggarwal at the boundary.

Commentator 1: "That's a huge wicket! Aarav Pathak had the potential to finish this chase, but he's perished trying to be too aggressive. Murugan Ashwin is weaving a web around this RCB batting lineup!"

#### 15.2 Overs: AB de Villiers (7 off 6) – STUMPED!

If RCB needed someone to rescue them, it was Mr. 360 himself, AB de Villiers. But Ashwin wasn't done yet. He saw ABD charging down the track and smartly bowled a wide leg-break. KL Rahul did the rest behind the stumps, whipping off the bails in a flash.

Commentator 2: "That is absolute genius from Murugan Ashwin! Flighted delivery, dragged wide, and de Villiers has been done in! RCB is collapsing here!"

16.5 Overs: Moeen Ali (4 off 3) – BOWLED!

Another one bites the dust! Moeen Ali tried to sweep but missed, and the ball crashed into the stumps.

Commentator 1: "This is unbelievable! RCB has gone from 100/0 to 135/6 in no time! The pressure is mounting. What a turnaround by Punjab!"

Wickets kept tumbling, and the lower order offered little resistance. The last few overs were a blur as Punjab wrapped things up. Murugan Ashwin finished with 4 wickets for 23 runs in 4 overs, completely dismantling RCB's batting lineup.

Commentator 2: "RCB, after such a promising start, have been bowled out for 169. What a collapse! Murugan Ashwin, take a bow! Punjab wins by 28 runs!"

The Punjab players celebrated wildly. KL Rahul, the winning captain, walked over to hug Murugan Ashwin, the star of the show.

Twitter Reactions:

After such a shocking collapse, Twitter exploded with reactions:

@rcb\_hopeful: "What just happened? How do you go from 100/0 to 169 all out?! RCB being RCB, I guess. #RCBvsKXIP"

@ashwin\_magic: "Murugan Ashwin – the new nightmare of Bangalore! 4 wickets in no time! What a spell!"

@kohli\_fan\_18: "We need to stop collapsing every season. This hurts. Kohli was playing so well!"

@kxipforever: "RCB fans before 10 overs: 'We got this easy.' RCB fans now: deleted tweet 😊😊😊"

Post-Match Reactions: Virat Kohli (RCB Captain):

"It's disappointing, no doubt. We had the game in our hands, but we let it slip. Credit to Murugan Ashwin, he bowled brilliantly. We need to regroup and come back stronger."

KL Rahul (KXIP Captain):

"We always believed we had a chance. Even at 100/0, we knew a couple of wickets could change the game. Murugan was outstanding today, and this win gives us a lot of confidence moving forward."

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Day after the match, Royal Challengers Bangalore's official social media pages posted a few clips that set the social media ablaze.

The first clip showed Aarav Pathak walking back to the dugout after getting out. As soon as he reached the tunnel, he kicked a dustbin in anger. Bottles flew everywhere. He didn't say a word, just stormed off, frustration written all over his face.

The second clip was a late-night video, shot long after the match had ended. The floodlights were dimmed, the stands were empty, but there was one man still on the field—Aarav Pathak. With a bat in his hands, he was practicing against his own teammates, hammering the ball into the night sky.

The video showed him launching massive sixes off Navdeep Saini, Mohammed Siraj, and even Dale Steyn! A few balls even disappeared into the stands, forcing the players to climb up and search for them.

The internet exploded. RCB fans, rivals, and cricket lovers couldn't stop talking about Aarav's fire.

Twitter Reactions:

@Aarav\_GOAT: "Aarav Pathak hitting sixes after the match is my motivation to not give up in life."

@RCBForever: "Bro is not even angry at the loss; he's angry at himself. This is what champions do!"

@KXIP\_Champ: "Aarav hitting sixes, yeah, but to RCB bowlers! 😊😊"

@ABD\_Wife: "Siraj, Saini, and Steyn were just fielding practice dummies for Aarav."

@Anushka\_RCB\_Kohli: "My man doesn't sleep after a loss, he PRACTICES. Future RCB captain?"

Memes Started Flooding In!

Caption: "Batman fights crime at night. Aarav fights cricket balls."

Image: Aarav hitting sixes while RCB bowlers look helpless.

Siraj and Saini searching for the lost balls in the stands:

Caption: "RCB players looking for their dignity after Aarav's practice session."

Image: A bunch of people in the dark searching for something with flashlights.

Aarav kicking the dustbin:

Caption: "RCB middle order vs Murugan Ashwin in one image."

Image: A still of Aarav's angry dustbin kick.

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Next Match RCB Vs MI

The energy in the empty stadium was still electric. Even without the roar of the crowd, the intensity of this battle between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Mumbai Indians could be felt through the screens worldwide.

Mumbai Indians won the toss and elected to field first, a decision that Rohit Sharma hoped would give them an advantage under the lights. Out walked Aaron Finch and Virat Kohli, ready to set a platform for RCB. Trent Boult had the ball in hand, and with the first delivery, the battle commenced.

Harsha Bhogle: "Trent Boult steaming in... first ball... lovely delivery, shaping away, and Finch shoulders arms."

Jatin Sapru: "The Kiwis know how to bowl with the new ball, Boult is keeping it tight!"

The first over was a maiden. Boult kept Finch on his toes with a series of testing deliveries. Then came Jasprit Bumrah to bowl the next over.

Second Over: Bumrah vs Kohli and Finch

Ball 1: Bumrah to Kohli, back of a length, nudged to third man for a single.

Ball 2: Bumrah to Finch, sharp bouncer! Finch ducks under it.

Ball 3: Another searing delivery, tight around off, Finch defends.

Ball 4: A yorker! Finch barely digs it out.

Ball 5: Fuller one, straight bat, defended again.

Ball 6: Bowled him! Finch is gone! 0(11).

Ravi Shastri: "Boom Boom Bumrah strikes! That's an absolute peach of a delivery, sneaking through the gate. Aaron Finch is walking back with disappointment."

RCB: 1/1 after 2 overs.

Full of confidence, determined to silence critics after his previous match's failure, Aarav jogged to the crease. The commentators knew something was about to happen.

Sidhu: "The tiger does not lose sleep over the opinion of sheep! Aarav Pathak is here, and tonight, the sky will rain sixes!"

Ball 1: Boult to Kohli, good length, guided to third man, single.

Ball 2: Boult to Aarav, full and straight—SIX! Boom! Down the ground, the ball sails into the stands!

Jatin Sapru: "OH MY WORD! That's an outrageous shot! First ball he sends it out of the park!"

Ball 3: Boult bowls outside off, Aarav scoops it over the keeper for FOUR!

Harsha Bhogle: "He's improvising already! That is cheeky from Aarav Pathak."

Ball 4: Boult fires in a yorker, Aarav shuffles and nudges for a single.

Sidhu: "The river doesn't worry about the rocks in its path, it flows with full power! Pathak is in beast mode!"

Kohli played the anchor role, rotating strike smartly, while Aarav exploded from the other end.

Aarav smashed two sixes off Rahul Chahar in the 7th over, stepping out and lofting them over long-on.

Bumrah returned in the 10th over, and Aarav upper-cut him for six over third man.

Krunal Pandya was introduced in the 12th over, but Aarav showed no mercy, slogging him for two back-to-back sixes.

Ravi Shastri: "OH HO HO! This is brute power! Pathak is playing MI bowlers like children tonight!"

RCB: 120/1 after 12 overs.

Kohli reached his fifty (54 off 40) before falling to a slower ball from Boult.

AB de Villiers walked in and joined the fireworks.

Aarav Pathak crossed his fifty in just 25 balls.

In the 16th over, he hammered Bumrah for 20 runs!

Ball 1: Yorker attempt—scooped for FOUR!

Ball 2: Length ball—pulled for SIX!

Ball 3: Slower delivery—drilled down the ground for FOUR!

Ball 4: Short—hooked for SIX!

Harsha Bhogle: "This is unreal hitting! Aarav Pathak is playing an innings of a lifetime and hitting Bumrah is not everyone cup of tea!"

Sidhu: "He's not just hitting sixes, he's launching missiles! Every ball is a satellite!"

Aarav finally fell after a breathtaking 81 off 37 balls, caught on the boundary trying to clear it again.

Jatin Sapru: "It took a near-impossible catch by Hardik Pandya! But what an innings this has been!"

AB de Villiers finished strong with 55 off 22 balls.

Moeen Ali chipped in with a fiery 27 off 10 balls.

RCB posted 222/3 in 20 overs.

Harsha Bhogle: "What a display of batting! Aarav, AB, and Kohli have set a mammoth total. Can MI chase this down?"

Sidhu: "Form is temporary, but class is permanent! Aarav Pathak was under fire after the last game, but tonight, he has answered in style!"

Ravi Shastri: "If MI wants to win this, they'll need something special. But remember, RCB has momentum now!"

As Aarav walked off the field, Aarav raised his bat toward the dressing room. Social media was already buzzing.

@RCBFanatic: "Aarav Pathak = Next Level! 🙌 🙌 🙌"

@CricCrazy: "Did we just witness a superstar in the making? Take a bow, Aarav! 🎩"

@MI\_Paltan: "Someone please stop this man! What a monster innings! 😱"

With 222 on the board, it was now time for the RCB bowlers to defend. But could they stop the mighty Mumbai Indians?