

## Cricket 30

### Chapter 30

The crowd at the KSCA Cricket Ground in Karnataka buzzed with anticipation. Under the blazing sun, all eyes were glued to the scoreboard. It was the final of the Vijay Merchant Trophy U16 Tournament, and what a final it had been. Karnataka, batting first, had posted a monumental 408 runs. Mumbai, in response, was tottering at 388 for 9. The situation was precarious. Aarav Pathak, the Mumbai captain, stood unbeaten on a majestic 204, and with him at the other end was Kamal, the last man standing. Just 20 runs were needed to lift the trophy, but one mistake could end it all.

In the commentary box, commentator's voice thundered, capturing the mood perfectly.

"What a moment we have here, ladies and gentlemen! Aarav Pathak, standing tall like a colossus, has carried Mumbai on his shoulders. This is what champions are made of—temperament, grit, and sheer class. But can he finish the job?"

The left-arm spinner came in to bowl. Aarav, calm and composed, carefully defended the first five balls of the over. With the fielders encircling him like vultures, the pressure was immense. On the sixth ball, he pushed a quick single, ensuring he retained the strike.

"Smart cricket from Aarav Pathak!" commentator exclaimed. "He knows the weight of the situation and is handling it like a seasoned pro."

The next over brought Karnataka's captain and spearhead, Nitesh Reddy, to the crease. The right-arm medium-pacer had been sensational throughout the tournament, and now, he stood with the ball in hand, ready to try and deliver Karnataka their victory.

The first ball of the over was pitched up outside off. Aarav moved into position and unleashed a glorious cover drive. The ball raced along the ground, piercing the field like a bullet.

"FOUR! That is textbook cricket!" commentator roared. "Poetry in motion! Aarav Pathak is putting on a masterclass."

Nitesh adjusted his line, bowling a wide yorker to keep Aarav in check. But Aarav shuffled across, getting low, and scooped the ball over fine leg for a massive six.

"Are you kidding me?!" commentator's voice rose with excitement. "That's AB de Villiers reincarnated! What a shot under pressure!"

The Mumbai fans erupted in cheers, and Aarav stood tall, his bat raised in defiance. The next ball was a dot, a solid defensive block that sent the message—Aarav wasn't going anywhere.

On the fourth ball, Nitesh attempted a yorker but missed his mark. The ball turned into a high full toss, and Aarav pounced on it. With a powerful flick behind the stumps, the ball soared into the stands for another six.

"BOOM! Out of the park! Aarav Pathak is in the zone of zones!" commentator exclaimed. "He's turning this final into his own backyard game."

With one ball left in the over, Nitesh changed tactics. The inner circle was packed with fielders, and he bowled a good-length delivery aimed at Aarav's pads. Aarav dug deep, summoning all his energy and focus. He swung hard, sending the ball racing through a narrow gap between the mid-wicket fielders. The ball bounced once, twice, and then sped across the boundary ropes.

"IT'S ALL OVER! Mumbai has done it! Aarav Pathak, take a bow!" commentator's voice boomed, electrifying the air. "A century to remember, a knock for the ages, and a victory that will be spoken of for years to come. The Vijay Merchant Trophy is coming to Mumbai after six long years!"

The Mumbai dugout erupted. Players stormed the field, embracing Aarav and Kamal, who had held his nerve at the other end. The KSCA crowd, despite their home team's loss, rose to applaud a match that epitomized the spirit of cricket.

The post-match ceremony began with all eyes on Aarav Pathak. As the announcer's voice echoed through the stadium, commentator summarized the journey:

"Ladies and gentlemen, what a tournament this has been! Mumbai has risen from the ashes to dominate every opponent in their path. It's not just about the runs, the wickets, or the wins—it's about the grit, the teamwork, and the never-say-die attitude. And leading from the front was this young man, Aarav Pathak."

The crowd roared as Aarav was invited to receive the Star Player of the Tournament award from Mr. Ravish Kumar, the Star Sports Chief Executive.

"Congratulations, Aarav," the announcer said. "With 1484 runs, including 5 centuries, 3 double centuries, and 1 triple century, along with 42 wickets, you've redefined excellence. How does it feel?"

Aarav, smiling modestly, replied, "It feels surreal. This tournament has been a rollercoaster, and I owe this to my team, coaches, and family. Cricket is a team sport, and I'm grateful for the support I've had throughout."

The announcer continued, "You've broken records, Aarav. Tell us—what fuels the run machine within you?"

Aarav laughed lightly. "I just try to play my natural game. It's all about staying in the moment and believing in yourself. Of course, it wouldn't have been possible without my teammates, who've been incredible throughout."

As Aarav returned to his seat, the announcer declared, "Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for the big one. Aarav Pathak, please come forward to collect the Vijay Merchant Trophy!"

The BCCI U16 head, Mr. Rajeev Trivedi, handed over the glittering trophy to Aarav, shaking his hand warmly. Cameras flashed as Aarav lifted the trophy high, a moment etched in history.

"This is what dreams are made of!" commentator's voice echoed. "Mumbai, led by their sensational captain, has conquered the summit. What a journey!"

commentator's final words summarized it all:

"Mark my words, folks. Aarav Pathak is a name you'll hear for years to come. This is just the beginning. India has found a future star, and today, we celebrate not just a win, but the emergence of a new era in cricket."

The Mumbai team posed for photos, holding the trophy with pride. The celebrations continued late into the night as they returned to their hotel, still buzzing from the victory.

The next morning, at the airport, Aarav and his team were excited to return home and celebrate their victory with their families. Newspapers also featured a small column with a headline celebrating Mumbai's triumph, with Aarav's name shining brightly as the star of the tournament.