

# KING OF CRICKET

## Chapter 4: The Grind to Greatness

Vikram was the kind of player every team wanted—a natural leader, a relentless competitor, and an opener with an innate ability to read the game. Tall, with an easygoing smile, he was known for his fierce determination on the field. During the summer break, when Aarav had been training alone at the farmhouse, Vikram had stepped up as captain and led the team through practice sessions. Under his leadership, the team had gained confidence, and now, with the tournament just around the corner, every player knew that Vikram's presence was crucial to their success.

The 15 players selected for the team were ready to push their limits. The squad was diverse, made up of the best from the school's cricket trials:

Batsmen: Aarav Pathak, Vikram Verma, Rajesh Mehta, Arjun Kumar, and Sameer Joshi

Bowlers: Kabir Patel, Anil Sharma, Suraj Reddy, Pranav Das, and Rohit Singh

All-rounders: Manav Agarwal, Rajan Kapoor, Akash Desai

Wicketkeepers: Ankit Yadav and Harsh Gupta

The team met every day after school, their schedule relentless. The day began at 7 AM with classes, where discussions about the tournament buzzed through the hallways. Between lessons, whispers of match tactics and predictions filled the air. After 2 PM, when the final bell rang, the team quickly assembled near the sports field. The early afternoon sun cast long, sharp shadows as the players, already feeling the weight of exhaustion, geared up for practice.

Mr. Sharma, their coach, was there waiting, clipboard in hand, eyes sharp as ever. The team gathered in front of him, all sweaty and eager, their jerseys sticking to their backs as if they had been drenched in rain.

"Listen up!" Mr. Sharma's voice boomed across the field, commanding attention. "This is the time to show what you're made of. The tournament is only a week away, and every practice session from now on will count. I expect you to give 110% every time you step on this field. Remember, this isn't just about winning; it's about proving to yourselves that you have what it takes."

The team nodded, a collective determination settling over them. Mr. Sharma continued, explaining the rules of the tournament and the structure of the elimination rounds. His voice dropped into a more serious tone as he emphasized discipline and strategy, warning them against complacency.

Aarav exchanged glances with Vikram, both of them feeling the gravity of their responsibility. Vikram nodded encouragingly at Aarav, and a spark of understanding passed between them.

"Alright, let's get moving!" Mr. Sharma said, snapping out of his speech. "We'll start with batting drills. Batsmen, you know the routine: footwork, shot placement, and speed. Bowlers, focus on line, length, and variations. All-rounders, I want to see your energy up there."

The field was soon filled with the sounds of cricket: the rhythmic thwack of bat against ball, the sharp yells of the wicketkeeper calling for a catch, and the grunts of the bowlers as they pushed themselves harder. Aarav took his position as a batsman first, facing off against Kabir Patel. Kabir, tall with an imposing presence, bowled at high speed, making the ball cut through the air like a dart.

"Watch the seam, Aarav!" Mr. Sharma shouted from the sidelines. Aarav adjusted his stance, eyes locked on Kabir's delivery. The first ball zipped past him, just grazing the stumps. Aarav exhaled, taking a moment to recalibrate. The next few balls were a test of skill and focus, as he smashed a couple into the field, earning nods of approval from his teammates.

"Nice placement, Aarav!" Vikram called out, his voice carrying across the field.

After 45 minutes of batting drills, it was time for the bowlers to take their turn. Anil Sharma, a left-arm fast bowler known for his ability to swing the ball both ways, stood at the mark, ready to start. His delivery was clean, sharp, and full of energy, pushing the batsmen to their limits.

"Great line, Anil! Keep it up!" Mr. Sharma said, making notes on his clipboard.

Pranav Das, the youngest in the squad but one with an unyielding spirit, followed. He bowled his heart out, sending the ball spinning and bouncing, challenging the batsmen. After each bowler's stint, Mr. Sharma would provide pointers—adjusting their wrist positions, reminding them to focus on stamina, and showing them how to read the batsman's eyes.

After hours of rigorous training, the sun began to dip behind the trees, casting an amber glow over the field. Mr. Sharma called the team over for a break and gathered them around for a final motivational talk. Aarav, drenched in sweat, felt the heat of the day settle into his bones, but he stood tall, head high, listening intently.

"Tomorrow, we'll focus on match simulations. Today was about understanding our strengths and weaknesses. Remember, cricket isn't just skill; it's about playing smart. We need to be sharp, adaptive, and fearless."

The team let out a collective cheer, voices blending into a chorus of resolve.

Aarav had one last thing he wanted to show Mr. Sharma before they called it a day. He approached his coach, who was standing by the boundary, watching the players with a critical eye.

"Sir, I've been working on a new bowling technique," Aarav said, panting slightly.

Mr. Sharma's eyes flickered with interest. "Let's see it, Pathak."

Aarav walked over to the bowling crease, the new technique fresh in his mind. He started his run-up, and the first ball spun out of his fingers with a deceptive bounce, catching Vikram off-guard. The ball raced past him and clattered into the stumps.

Vikram looked at Aarav with a raised eyebrow, admiration shining in his eyes. "That's some serious spin, Aarav," he said, shaking his head.

Aarav didn't stop. He bowled the next 11 deliveries, each with a different swing or variation. Some were outswing that swing away, others were cutter that came in sharply. Three out of those 12 deliveries caught Vikram off-guard, making him miss the ball entirely. The other four were defended valiantly, and the rest left him to rely on Ankit Yadav behind the stumps.

Mr. Sharma's eyes widened as he watched the performance. He clapped his hands, a smile spreading across his face. "That was incredible, Aarav! You've got something here. Keep working on it, and you'll be unstoppable."

The team gathered around, a buzz of excitement spreading like wildfire. Vikram, still holding his bat, grinned at Aarav. "Looks like we're going to make some noise in this tournament, captain."

Aarav nodded, his heart pounding with a mix of exhaustion and exhilaration. The journey had only begun, but with this team, with this newfound skill, he knew that they were ready to fight for their victory.

As the players walked off the field, their shoes crunching the gravel, there was a sense of anticipation in the air. Each player carried with them the fire of competition, the weight of the coming weeks, and the hope that, together, they could achieve something extraordinary.

Author Note:-

Well Another 1100+ words chapter, so author is also grinding hard so please support, with support only i could write more chapters as it would motivate me.