

Cricket 58

Chapter 58

The journey back to India wasn't exactly smooth sailing. A delay in the flight schedule, combined with a few logistical hiccups, meant that Arshdeep and I arrived later than expected. To our disappointment, we missed the ODI series altogether, which was a real letdown. The first ODI match had already ended in a draw, and the second one was a sweet victory for India, thanks to standout performances by Yashasvi Jaiswal, who scored a majestic century, and Abhishek Sharma and Prithvi Shaw, who contributed with crucial half-centuries.

Now, the spotlight turned to Test Match, to be played at the iconic Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. This was my moment—my return to the field after rigorous preparation over the last two weeks. The weight of captaincy once again rested on my shoulders, and I was ready to lead the team to victory.

The morning of the match dawned bright and sunny, the perfect setting for cricket. The stadium was buzzing with anticipation, fans filling the stands early to catch a glimpse of their heroes. The pitch was hard and had a light grass covering, suggesting assistance for both pacers and spinners if utilized properly.

At the toss, the energy in the air was electric. The South African captain, Marco Jansen, stood beside me, his towering frame a picture of calm confidence. The match referee flipped the coin, and I called it right.

"India wins the toss!" came the announcement over the loudspeakers, and the crowd erupted in cheers. I couldn't help but smile as I walked over for the customary pre-match interview.

"Captain, you've been away for a while. How does it feel to be back leading the side?" the interviewer asked.

"It feels amazing," I replied. "There's nothing like representing your country, especially at a place like Wankhede. The energy here is something else. We've had good preparation, and the boys are ready to give their all."

"What's the plan after winning the toss?"

"We're going to bowl first," I said. "The conditions look favorable for the bowlers early on, and we'd like to make the most of it. The pitch will settle as the game progresses, so chasing might be a better option."

The interviewer then turned to Jansen. "Marco, you've had a mixed series so far. How do you plan to approach this decider?"

Jansen smiled faintly. "It's been a challenging series, but we've learned a lot. We're looking forward to putting up a strong fight here. The conditions are good for cricket, and we'll look to capitalize."

The teams lined up for the national anthems, and as the last note of "Jana Gana Mana" echoed around the stadium, I felt a surge of pride and determination. This was it—the time to deliver.

As the game began, the commentary box was buzzing with excitement. The voice of the commentator boomed over the broadcast, filled with the kind of energy that could make even the most mundane moment feel monumental.

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to the Wankhede Stadium for this thrilling Test Match. India versus South Africa—this is what cricket is all about! India has won the toss and elected to bowl

first, a decision that could set the tone for the match. The pitch has a bit of grass, and the conditions are perfect for swing bowling. Strap yourselves in; this is going to be a cracker of a game!"

Our pacers started strong. Aarav, with his towering presence, and Kartik Tyagi, with his relentless precision, made the new ball talk. The first breakthrough came in the fifth over. Aarav delivered a beauty that angled in before seaming away sharply, catching the edge of the opener's bat. The ball flew to second slip, where Gill took a sharp catch.

"GOT HIM! What a delivery from Aarav! That's a peach, ladies and gentlemen! Angled in, seamed away, kissed the edge, and straight into the safe hands of Gill. South Africa is one down!"

Arshdeep Singh joined the attack soon after and made an immediate impact. His left-arm angle created problems for the South African batsmen, and he trapped their number three plumb in front with a lethal inswinger.

"PLUMB! Absolutely plumb! Arshdeep Singh strikes in his very first over. That's what you call making an impact! South Africa in trouble now, two down for not much on the board."

The crowd roared with every wicket, and the momentum was firmly with us. The bowlers were relentless, and by lunch, South Africa was reeling at 65/3. 2 for Captain Aarav and 1 for Arshdeep.

"Ladies and gentlemen, what a session for India! The bowlers have been on fire. Aarav, Kartik, Shiavm, and Arshdeep have bowled their hearts out, and South Africa is under the pump. This is Test cricket at its finest!"

Post-lunch, the spinners came into play. Ravi Bishnoi, with his guile and experience, bamboozled the middle order. He picked up two quick wickets, one with a classic off-spinner that turned sharply to bowl the batsman through the gate.

"BOWLED HIM! Ravi, you beauty! That's a magician at work. The ball spun sharply, and the batsman had no clue. India is all over South Africa like a rash!"

By tea, South Africa was bowled out for 172, a total that was below par on this surface. As we walked off the field, I felt a sense of accomplishment but knew the job was far from over.

When it was our turn to bat, we started cautiously. The South African pacers, led by Jansen, were disciplined, extracting whatever help they could from the surface. Prithvi Shaw and Jaiswal opened for us, building a steady partnership. Prithvi played with his usual flair, hitting some exquisite boundaries, while Jaiswal held the innings together with his calm and composed approach.

By stumps, we were 90/1, with Jaiswal getting out early at 45, missing a dear half century. India ended the day in a commanding position but aware of the challenges ahead. The dressing room was buzzing with positive energy as we reviewed the day's play.

The next day was all about consolidating the advantage. Aarav Pathak and Abhishek Sharma put on a masterclass of batting. Aarav's century was a spectacle, filled with elegant drives and calculated risks. Abhishek supported him brilliantly, rotating the strike and punishing loose deliveries.

"CENTURY! Take a bow, skipper Aarav! What an innings this has been. Class, temperament, and skill—he's got it all. India is in the driver's seat now!"

By the time our innings ended, we had amassed a massive 450, giving us a lead of 278 runs. The crowd was ecstatic, and the pressure was squarely on South Africa.

In their second innings, South Africa showed more fight, with their skipper Jansen leading from the front with a gritty half-century. But our bowlers were relentless. Aarav and Ravi once again rose to the occasion, picking up wickets at crucial intervals.

The final wicket fell late on the fourth day, sealing a comprehensive victory for us by an innings and 32 runs. The Wankhede erupted in celebrations as we walked off the field, victorious and proud.

"GAME, SET, AND MATCH! India wins the Test and the series! What a performance from this team. The bowlers were exceptional, the batsmen clinical, and the captaincy—absolutely spot on. This is why we love cricket!"

As I held the trophy aloft, surrounded by my teammates, the moment felt surreal. The journey had been long and challenging, but moments like these made it all worthwhile. The crowd's chants of "India! India!" echoed in my ears as I looked forward to many more such victories in the future.

After the Match team was very happy, everyone performed and did what they were expected and Tilak Verma being injured also returned to the team, after 5 days of medications and fitness test. I got the Man of the Match award for brilliant century and wickets 5 wickets in the match. although Ravi took 8 wickets in both of the inning combined but my century helped me with this Trophy.

As I was sitting in NCA Dorm, I received the Reward from the system, and to think of the reward my mood got sour, and i think to strangle system to death. I got reward -> Technique to clean Bathroom without wasting Much water. I was like wtf would i would with this skill then i sleep after feeling the hurt and sadness due to system.