

KING OF CRICKET

Chapter 6: The Battle for Glory

The stadium was electric with anticipation as the teams prepared for the opening T20 match of the Gurukul Winter Tournament. The sun blazed in the clear blue sky, casting long shadows across the field. The crowd's buzz rose and fell in waves, and the sound of cheers mingled with the distant rustle of the trees surrounding the ground.

Aarav, his heart thundering with a mix of excitement and nerves, glanced at the VIP stand where his mother sat, eyes shining with pride as she cheered for the team. He scanned the seats for his father, but they were empty. A flicker of disappointment crossed his mind, but he knew his father had responsibilities that couldn't be ignored. He'll be here in spirit, Aarav thought, tightening his grip on the bat and pushing away any lingering doubts.

The match began, and Rajesh Mehta, a sturdy right-handed opener, walked out with Vikram Verma, the team's powerhouse. The first over was a careful test of nerves, the bowlers from A4 Delta School making sure to probe for

weaknesses. Vikram's eyes gleamed with determination as he faced the deliveries, dodging and weaving until he found his groove.

"Now, this is going to be interesting, folks!" the commentator's voice crackled, excitement building. "MC School's openers are facing some early challenges from A4 Delta's bowlers. Let's see how they respond!"

As Vikram cut loose, delivering some blistering shots, Rajesh, with a determined swing, lofted a ball high over mid-on for a boundary. But disaster struck in the next over. Facing a sharp delivery, Rajesh attempted a pull shot that edged off his gloves, and he was caught by the wicketkeeper at 12 runs off just 8 balls.

Aarav stepped up to the crease, a hush falling over the crowd. The commentator's voice surged with enthusiasm. "Aarav Pathak is here! The boy who's made waves with his stunning performances in school trials. Let's see if he can live up to the hype today."

The first ball was bowled to Aarav, a length delivery outside off stump. With practiced ease, he leaned forward and drove the ball through the gap between cover and point. It raced to the boundary, a perfect cover drive that drew gasps from the spectators and cheers from his teammates.

Aarav's eyes caught his mother's in the stands, and he saw her shouting, waving her hands, her voice lost in the roar of the crowd. The wave of encouragement pushed him to find his rhythm, and with Vikram's help, they began to build the innings.

The crowd erupted when Vikram, in full form, dispatched a ball over square leg for a six, showcasing his raw power. But luck wasn't on their side for long. In the sixth over, with the score at 88, Vikram went for an ambitious shot but misjudged the delivery. He was caught at deep mid-wicket for a quick 34 runs off just 11 balls.

Aarav stepped up once more, this time with Arjun Kumar at the other end. The situation called for control and strategy, and Aarav delivered. He executed a beautiful flick off a slower ball, sending it sailing over the fine-leg boundary for a six that brought the crowd to their feet. The commentator, almost breathless, praised the elegance of the shot. "What a stroke! Aarav Pathak has been on fire today. A flick that would make even the greats proud."

By the time he reached 51 runs off just 24 balls, Aarav was in a zone, connecting with the ball like never before. Every shot he played was a testament to his training. But as fate would have it, the end came sooner than expected. On the penultimate delivery of his innings, with the team at a formidable 161, Aarav faced a bouncer aimed at his body. He leapt sideways,

trying to pull the ball, but the timing was off. The ball soared high, caught by the fielder on the boundary, and Aarav was out for 91 runs off 43 balls. The crowd fell silent, then erupted in applause for his spectacular innings.

"91 runs off 43 balls, what an innings by Aarav Pathak! He's shown everyone why he's one of the most promising players in this tournament," the commentator praised.

As Aarav walked off the field, the team's spirits were high, but the real challenge awaited them. He called the team into a huddle, his voice steady but charged with enthusiasm. "Listen up, everyone. We've got a good total, but we need to bowl with purpose. Let's keep the pressure on and show them what we've got. We need to bowl smartly and field fiercely."

The crowd's chants grew louder as Rohit Singh, one of their strongest bowlers, stepped up for the first over. His action was smooth, his pace formidable. After four overs, A4 Delta School was 38 for 1, with Rohit taking the first wicket. The tension was palpable.

Aarav took the ball and prepared for his first over, adrenaline coursing through his veins. He bowled with precision, varying his pace and length. On his second ball, the batsman swung wildly, and Aarav's delivery crashed into the

stumps. "What a delivery! Aarav Pathak with another breakthrough!" the commentator roared.

With confidence soaring, Aarav struck again, dismissing another batter with a clean yorker that rattled the stumps. His spell was a testament to his training, taking 3 wickets for just 17 runs in 4 overs. Rohit Singh, relentless and focused, took 4 wickets for 24 runs, shutting down the opposition's hopes. The combined effort from the bowlers and the team's discipline brought A4 Delta School to a quick end at 120 runs, falling short of the target.

The team erupted in joy, shouting and embracing each other. Aarav's eyes found his mother in the crowd, her face radiant with pride. The victory was theirs, and it was just the beginning of their journey to the qualifiers.

"Good job, team!" Aarav shouted, a wide grin spreading across his face. "Let's keep this momentum going!"