

## Cricket 67

### Chapter 67

The grand finale of the U19 World Cup – India vs Pakistan – was a spectacle like no other. The stadium, packed to its capacity, was a sea of vibrant tricolor and green, with fans from both nations chanting passionately for their teams. The atmosphere was electric, the stakes high, and the anticipation palpable. This was more than just a cricket match; it was a battle of pride, skill, and resilience.

The two teams lined up for the national anthems, after which it was time for the all-important toss. The two captains, Hassan Khan of Pakistan and Aarav Pathak of India, walked to the center of the pitch accompanied by the match referee, Vijay sangget

As the crowd roared, the coin was flipped by Aarav, and Hassan called for tails. The coin landed tails-up, giving Pakistan the advantage. Hassan, looking confident, announced that Pakistan would bat first.

The pitch reporter caught up with the captains for a quick interview before the match began.

Reporter: "Hassan, congratulations on winning the toss. You've chosen to bat first in the final. What's the game plan?"

Hassan Khan: "Thank you. The pitch looks good for batting early on, and we want to make the most of the conditions. India has a strong team, and they've been unbeaten, but finals are a different game. We'll look to post a big total and then put them under pressure with our bowling attack."

Reporter: "Aarav, tough luck at the toss. India hasn't lost a single match this tournament. Does that put additional pressure on your team?"

Aarav Pathak: "Not at all. It's been a great journey so far, and our focus remains the same – to play fearless and disciplined cricket. Losing the toss doesn't change our approach. We have a strong bowling unit, and if we can execute our plans, we'll restrict Pakistan to a manageable total."

Reporter: "The whole world is watching this iconic clash. Any message for your fans?"

Hassan Khan: "To all our fans, we'll give it our best and make you proud."

Aarav Pathak: "Thank you for your unwavering support, and we are here to win that we have shown till now, and to our supporters don't worry, Trophy is coming to India."

Pakistan Playing 11: -

Imran Shah

Muhammad Zaid

Rohail Nazir

Ali Zaryab

Ammad Alam

Mohammad Taha

Saad Khan

Hassan Khan (c)

Shaheen Shah Afridi

Muhammad Musa

Arshad Iqbal

India Playing 11: -

Yashashvi Jaiswal

Prithvi Shaw

Aarav Pathak (Captain)

Tilak Verma

Shubman Gill (VC)

Dhruv Jurel (WK)

Riyan Parag

Kartik Tyagi

Arshdeep Singh

Shivam Mavi

Ravi Bishnoi

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The U19 World Cup final between India and Pakistan began with high expectations from both sides.

The match kicked off with Pakistan's openers Imran Shah and Muhammad Zaid taking guard, trying to set a strong foundation for their team. The first few overs seemed promising as the Pakistani openers played cautiously, picking up a few boundaries and rotating the strike well. However, the Indian bowlers had other plans.

Arshdeep Singh struck in his third over, delivering a fiery inswinger that rattled Imran Shah's stumps. The young bowler pumped his fists in celebration as the Indian supporters erupted in cheers. Imran walked back, contributing only 12 runs.

This early breakthrough set the tone, and in his next over, Arshdeep trapped Muhammad Zaid leg-before-wicket with another lethal delivery. Pakistan was suddenly 22/2, and the pressure was evident on their faces. The Indian fielders were electric, backing their bowlers with sharp stops and enthusiastic appeals.

The responsibility now fell on Rohail Nazir and Ali Zaryab to stabilize the innings. They managed to string together a partnership, with Ali playing some elegant drives and Rohail countering with calculated aggression. The pair added 45 runs, but the introduction of Ravi Bishnoi in the 10th over turned the game on its head.

Bishnoi's first ball was a googly that foaxed Ali Zaryab, who edged it to slip, where Aarav Pathak took a sharp catch. The Indian captain's brilliant reflexes ignited the crowd once again. Bishnoi wasn't done yet; his next over saw him clean-bowling Rohail Nazir with a delivery that spun sharply into the batsman. Rohail's fighting knock ended, and Pakistan was reeling at 70/4.

The middle order, consisting of Ammad Alam and Mohammad Taha, tried to rebuild, but Bishnoi was unrelenting. His flight and variations were too much for the Pakistani batters. In the 15th over, Bishnoi struck twice in consecutive balls, removing Ammad Alam and Saad Khan (0) with impeccable deliveries that left the batsmen clueless. Bishnoi's hat-trick ball was defended by Hassan Khan, but the damage was already done.

Now, Pakistan's captain Hassan Khan and Mohammad Taha attempted to salvage the innings. Hassan showed grit, striking a few boundaries and taking calculated risks. Taha supported him well, but India's bowlers continued to apply pressure. Aarav Pathak brought himself into the attack in the 22nd over, and his tactical brilliance paid off.

Aarav's second delivery was a sharp bouncer that forced Taha into a mistimed pull shot. The ball ballooned into the air, and Tilak Varma took an outstanding running catch near mid-wicket. Aarav then removed Hassan Khan with a perfectly pitched outswinger that caught the edge and was snapped up by Jurel behind the stumps. The Pakistani captain departed for 23 runs, leaving his team at 183/8.

Arshdeep returned for another spell and cleaned up the tail with clinical precision. He bowled Shaheen Afridi and Muhammad Musa in quick succession, both with searing yorkers that left no chance for the batsmen.

The final wicket fell to Bishnoi, who claimed his fifth wicket by trapping Arshad Iqbal LBW. Bishnoi's exceptional figures of 5/34 in 8 overs underlined his dominance in the game. Pakistan was all out for 200 runs in 34 overs.

### Key Bowling Performances:

Ravi Bishnoi: 5 wickets for 34 runs in 8 overs

Arshdeep Singh: 3 wickets for 46 runs in 7 overs

Aarav Pathak: 2 wickets for 28 runs in 6 overs

As the Indian team walked off the field, they were greeted by deafening cheers from the crowd. Aarav huddled his players together, praising their efforts but reminding them that the job wasn't done yet. "We've bowled brilliantly, but now it's time to chase this down and bring the trophy home!" he said with determination.

The stage was set for India's chase in this monumental final.

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The crowd at the stadium was electric, and why not? It was the U19 World Cup final, and two arch-rivals, India and Pakistan, were facing off for cricket's ultimate glory. Pakistan had set India a modest target of 201 runs, and with the Indian lineup that had dominated the tournament, it seemed like a straightforward chase. But cricket, as they say, is a game of glorious uncertainties.

The Indian innings began under the lights, with Yashasvi Jaiswal and Prithvi Shaw walking out to a deafening roar from the crowd. But the buzz soon turned to murmurs as Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi, breathing fire with the new ball, struck early. His second delivery to Jaiswal was a lethal inswinger, a delivery straight out of a fast-bowler's dream. Jaiswal was caught on the crease, and the stumps went cartwheeling. "What a start for Pakistan! That's the stuff of legends!" the commentator exclaimed. India was 1/1 in the very first over.

Prithvi Shaw, known for his aggressive intent, tried to counterattack. He pulled, drove, and flicked with flair, taking the fight to the Pakistani bowlers. But the introduction of Arshad Iqbal in the seventh over turned the game again. A sharp short ball hurried Shaw into a pull shot, only for him to top-edge it to midwicket. Shaw departed for 19 runs, and India was wobbling at 26/2.

The fall of two early wickets brought the Indian skipper, Aarav Pathak, to the crease. The stage was perfectly set for a captain's knock, and Aarav knew the weight of expectations on his shoulders. Striding in with calm confidence, he began to steady the ship with Shubman Gill. Together, the duo showcased class and temperament, weathering the Pakistani storm. Aarav was all elegance, flicking through midwicket and driving through the covers, while Gill provided the perfect foil with his textbook batting.

The partnership flourished, and the scoreboard began to tick. Gill brought up his half-century with a crisp square cut off Mohammad Musa, and Aarav soon followed with his fifty, bringing the crowd back to life. "This is top-quality batting! The skipper is leading by example, and Shubman is playing the innings of his life!" the commentator bellowed.

But just when India seemed in control, Hassan Khan, Pakistan's captain, turned to his ace spinner, Qais Ahmad, and the game took another twist. Gill, batting on 52, misjudged a sharp googly and was trapped plumb in front. The appeal was loud, the finger went up, and Gill had to walk back. India was 121/3, and the pressure was back.

With Tilak Varma joining Aarav at the crease, hopes were high, but Pakistan's bowlers weren't letting up. Tilak couldn't handle the relentless accuracy of Shaheen Afridi and was bowled for 11. The lower middle

order collapsed like a house of cards. Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, and Ravi Bishnoi fell in quick succession, contributing just 6, 4, and 1, respectively. At 171/8, India's dreams seemed to be slipping away.

But Aarav Pathak wasn't done yet.

The captain, batting on 83, dug in with unwavering focus. He farmed the strike, shielded the tail, and played one of the most inspired innings of his career. Against the reverse swing of Shaheen and the guile of Qais, Aarav maneuvered the field brilliantly, rotating the strike and striking boundaries when it mattered. A glorious straight drive off Shaheen brought him into the nineties, and the crowd roared his name.

With just 10 runs needed for victory and 2 wickets in hand, the tension was palpable. Aarav, now on 99, faced a fired-up Musa. The ball was pitched on a good length, and Aarav unleashed a textbook cover drive, piercing the gap for four. The crowd erupted as he raised his bat. "Take a bow, young man! That's a captain's knock for the ages! Under pressure, on the grandest stage of them all, Aarav Pathak has delivered!" the commentator's voice echoed.

In the company of Kartik Tyagi, Aarav sealed the chase with a powerful pull shot to the boundary. India had won the U19 World Cup, chasing down the target with just one wicket to spare. Aarav remained unbeaten on 109, a true captain's innings that will be remembered for generations.

Indian Batting Scorecard: Yashasvi Jaiswal: 1 (4) – Bowled by Shaheen Afridi Prithvi Shaw: 19 (27) – Caught off Arshad Iqbal Aarav Pathak (c): 109\* (138) – Not Out Shubman Gill: 52 (70) – LBW by Qais Ahmad Tilak Varma: 11 (19) – Bowled by Shaheen Afridi Dhruv Jurel: 6 (10) – Caught off Musa Riyan Parag: 4 (7) – Bowled by Hassan Khan Ravi Bishnoi: 1 (5) – Bowled by Qais Ahmad Kartik Tyagi: 0\* (8) – Not Out Pakistan Bowling Figures: Shaheen Afridi: 3 wickets for 38 runs Arshad Iqbal: 2 wickets for 42 runs Qais Ahmad: 2 wickets for 29 runs Hassan Khan: 1 wicket for 35 runs

The Indian team rushed onto the field to celebrate, lifting Aarav on their shoulders as fireworks lit up the night sky. The trophy presentation saw Aarav Pathak crowned Player of the Match, with Ravi Bishnoi's five-wicket haul in the first innings also earning plaudits.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is what champions are made of! India has been unbeaten throughout the tournament, and they've capped it off with a victory in the most thrilling fashion!" the commentator concluded. It was a night of heroes, and Aarav Pathak's name was etched in history as a leader who led from the front to bring the World Cup home.

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As the dust settled on an unforgettable U19 World Cup final, the Indian team gathered on the field, soaking in the euphoria of their monumental victory. The post-match presentation ceremony was the icing on the cake, a moment that etched their names in history.

The first accolade of the evening was the Player of the Match, and unsurprisingly, it went to none other than Aarav Pathak. His unbeaten 109 under immense pressure had single-handedly steered India to victory. As Aarav walked up to receive his award, the crowd erupted in cheers. Holding the trophy aloft, he acknowledged the fans, his teammates, and the support staff with a modest smile. "It's not just my victory—it's the team's. Everyone contributed, and I'm proud to have led this side to glory," Aarav said during his brief speech.

Next came the announcement for the Player of the World Cup, and once again, Aarav Pathak's name echoed through the stadium. Having been the backbone of India's campaign with consistent performances both with the bat and as a leader, Aarav had been nothing short of sensational. The commentator remarked, "Aarav Pathak has not just been a captain but a match-winner. He's been the glue that held this team together, and his efforts have culminated in this triumph."

Then came the moment everyone was waiting for—the Trophy Presentation. Aarav, donning his Indian jersey with pride, stepped forward to receive the glittering World Cup trophy. Accompanied by his teammates, he approached the dais where the ICC officials, dignitaries, and legends like Sachin Tendulkar and Shane Warne awaited. The crowd's chants of "India, India!" reached a crescendo as the trophy was handed over.

Aarav held the trophy high above his head, and the Indian team exploded into jubilant cheers, confetti bursting into the air. The players huddled around their captain, some jumping, others laughing, and a few even shedding tears of joy. The trophy was then passed around, with each player taking a moment to bask in the glory.

The team's celebrations moved to the field as the players took a victory lap, waving to the fans who had turned out in thousands. The Indian tricolor fluttered high, carried proudly by the players as they shared their joy with the crowd. There were playful moments too—Prithvi Shaw tried to mimic Aarav's batting stance, while Ravi Bishnoi teased Shubman Gill about his missed century. The camaraderie among the players was evident, showcasing a group that had bonded deeply over the course of the tournament.

The evening culminated in the official photo session. The entire squad, including the support staff, gathered on a podium with the trophy at the center. Aarav sat in the front row, flanked by his deputies, holding the World Cup close to his heart. Behind them stood the rest of the players, arms on each other's shoulders, smiles stretching from ear to ear. The moment was immortalized in a series of photographs that captured not just a victorious team but also a legacy that would inspire generations to come.

As the night wore on, the Indian camp remained lively. The players joked, danced, and relived their favorite moments from the game. Aarav, always the composed leader, finally allowed himself to revel in the victory, laughing and posing for selfies with his teammates.

The U19 World Cup had not just been a cricketing tournament—it was a journey of resilience, teamwork, and the making of future legends. India's triumph was a testament to their determination

and talent, and as the celebrations continued late into the night, one thing was certain: the future of Indian cricket was in incredible hands.

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#### INTERVIEW TIME FOR CAPTAIN AARAV PATHAK

1. How does it feel to lift the U19 World Cup as captain?

"It's an indescribable feeling. Leading this amazing group of players to the title has been a dream come true. This is not just my victory but a collective effort by the team, the support staff, and the fans who've supported us throughout."

2. You played a match-winning knock in the final. What was going through your mind when wickets were falling around you?

"I knew I had to stay calm and play each ball on its merit. The idea was to anchor the innings while ensuring we didn't let the required run rate climb. It was all about backing myself and trusting my teammates."

3. What does this victory mean for Indian cricket and for you personally?

"This victory is a testament to the depth of talent in Indian cricket. Personally, it's a stepping stone—a moment to cherish, but also a reminder of the hard work that lies ahead."

4. How did you motivate the team when things weren't going your way during the match?

"Cricket is a game of momentum. I reminded the boys to focus on the basics, stick to our plans, and believe in themselves. We've always played as a unit, and that's what mattered most."

5. What was the game plan while chasing Pakistan's total in the final?

"The plan was to take it session by session. We knew their bowling was strong, so the focus was on partnerships and minimizing risks early on. Once I found my rhythm, it was about pacing the innings and finishing the job."

6. How would you describe the contributions of your teammates throughout the tournament?

"Every single player stepped up at some point. Whether it was Ravi Bishnoi's brilliant bowling or Gill with the bat, everyone played their role perfectly. This victory is a result of our collective effort."

7. What role did the support staff and coaching team play in this journey?

"They've been the backbone of our success. From tactical planning to mental conditioning, they ensured we were always prepared for any challenge. Credit goes to them for their tireless work behind the scenes."

8. How did it feel to have legends like Sachin Tendulkar and Shane Warne in the stadium during the final?

"It was an honor to play in front of them. Their presence added to the occasion, and it inspired all of us to give our best. Meeting them before the match was surreal, and their words of encouragement meant a lot."

9. What's next for you and your cricketing journey?

"This is just the beginning. My focus now is on improving my game and making the transition to the senior level. There's a lot to learn, and I'm excited for what lies ahead."

10. What message would you like to give to aspiring young cricketers back home?

"Believe in yourself and work hard. There will be ups and downs, but never lose sight of your goals. Play for the love of the game, and the results will follow."

The interview session ended with Aarav receiving a standing ovation, further cementing his legacy as a rising star in Indian cricket.