

Cricket 76

Chapter 76

Hey everyone! If you're looking for a captivating read, I highly recommend checking out *A Life Is Loading* by DevilOfOwnWorld, who happens to be one of my friends. This book offers a unique blend of adventure, business, and slice-of-life elements that will keep you hooked from start to finish. Whether you're into thrilling escapades or intriguing personal journeys, this story has something for everyone. Give it a try right here on this platform—you won't regret it!

The frustration of not being in the playing XI was building up inside me, but I knew this was part of the journey. The IPL was a high-stakes tournament, and with RCB's star-studded lineup, breaking into the XI was never going to be easy. The first couple of matches came and went. Against Kings XI Punjab, we secured a fantastic win, thanks to Umesh Yadav's fiery bowling spell. Watching from the sidelines, I admired his aggression and precision.

In the second match, we faced the Rajasthan Royals, but unfortunately, we couldn't get the job done. While our batsmen put up a decent score, the bowlers struggled to contain the opposition. On a personal level, the match was bittersweet as I got to reconnect with some of my friends from the U19 team who were also benched. We shared a few laughs, reminisced about our World Cup journey, and talked about the challenges of being newcomers in the IPL.

By the time our fourth match against Mumbai Indians rolled around, the tension in the dressing room was palpable. Mumbai Indians were a formidable side, and everyone knew we had to bring our A-game to stand a chance. On the eve of the match, Virat bhaiya called a team meeting.

The room was abuzz with whispers and speculation as we all gathered. The senior players were seated in the front, their experience reflected in their calm demeanor. The rest of us found seats towards the back, a mix of anticipation and nerves evident on our faces.

Virat bhaiya stood at the front, his presence commanding the room. "Alright, everyone," he began, his voice firm yet encouraging. "We're up against Mumbai Indians tomorrow, and we all know what kind of team they are. They're balanced, experienced, and dangerous. But so are we."

He paused, scanning the room. "We've had a mixed start to the season. A win, a loss—it's nothing to worry about. What matters is how we respond. Tomorrow's match isn't just about winning. It's about making a statement. I want every single one of you to be ready, whether you're on the field or on the bench. This is a team effort."

Then came the part everyone was waiting for—the playing XI announcement. My heart was pounding in my chest, but I kept a neutral expression.

Finally, he looked up and added, "...and Aarav. You're in the XI."

For a moment, I was stunned. I wasn't sure if I'd heard him correctly. Then the realization hit me like a tidal wave. I was going to play my first IPL match.

"Aarav," Virat bhaiya continued, his gaze locking with mine, "I've seen you put in the work in the nets. You've got raw talent, but tomorrow, I want you to show me you've got the nerves too. Don't think too much. Stick to the basics and play your game."

"Yes, bhaiya," I managed to reply, my voice steady despite the storm of emotions inside me.

As the meeting wrapped up, the senior players came over to congratulate me. AB put an arm around my shoulder, his warm smile reassuring. "Your first IPL game—big moment, mate. Just remember to enjoy it. Don't let the occasion get to you."

Later that night, I lay in bed, unable to sleep. The thought of stepping onto the field at Wankhede Stadium in an RCB jersey was exhilarating and daunting at the same time. I knew tomorrow would be one of the biggest days of my life.

The moment I had been dreaming of had finally arrived. I was officially in the playing XI, replacing Mandeep Singh. I couldn't help but feel a surge of pride and nervous energy as I donned the iconic RCB jersey for the first time. My heart raced with anticipation as we headed to the iconic Wankhede Stadium for our clash against Mumbai Indians.

The evening was electric, with the stadium buzzing with fans cheering for their respective teams. It was a sea of blue and red as the crowd roared, setting the perfect stage for an epic contest. As both teams warmed up, the cameras zoomed in on the captains, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, walking out to the middle for the toss.

The toss was conducted with the usual pomp, the coin flipping in the air under the watchful eyes of the match referee. "Tails," Rohit Sharma called, and the coin landed in his favor.

"Rohit, what's the decision?" asked the presenter.

"We'll bat first," Rohit said with his trademark smile. "The pitch looks good, and Wankhede is always a good ground to set a target on. Hopefully, we can put up a competitive score."

The mic then turned to Virat bhaiya. "Virat, any changes in your playing XI today?"

"Yes," he replied, his voice steady and confident. "We have Aarav in place of Mandeep. Aarav will be making his IPL debut today. He's a young man who practices tirelessly, and we've seen his potential in the nets. Hopefully, he can make the most of this opportunity and do well for the team."

Hearing those words from the captain himself gave me a boost of confidence. The cameras briefly panned to me standing near the boundary ropes, and the commentators chimed in with some praise about my U19 World Cup performance and the potential I brought to the team.

With the toss concluded, the team huddled together for a quick chat. Virat bhaiya's words were as fiery as ever. "Alright, boys, we've got a game to win. Stick to the plans, back yourselves, and let's put on a show for our fans."

As the Mumbai Indians openers, Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan, padded up, I couldn't help but feel the pressure mounting. The Wankhede buzzed with energy, and I knew this was my chance to make a name for myself on one of cricket's grandest stages.

As we took our positions on the field, the roar of the Wankhede crowd was deafening. My heart was pounding, the weight of the occasion sinking in. I was adjusting my fielding position when I suddenly heard Virat bhaiya call out to me, "Aarav!"

I turned, confused, and jogged over to him. He smiled and said, "You're bowling the first over."

I froze for a moment, staring at him in disbelief. "Me?" I asked, almost certain I'd misheard.

"Yes, you," he said firmly, placing a reassuring hand on my shoulder. "Go ahead. You've got this. Just bowl like you've been practicing."

"But—" I started, but he cut me off.

"No buts. It's your moment. Take it."

I nodded, trying to steady my breath. As I walked to my mark, the enormity of the situation hit me. My IPL debut, the iconic Wankhede Stadium, and I was about to bowl the very first over.

The crowd was electric, chanting and cheering as I took my stance. Rohit Sharma stood at the crease, calm and composed, exuding the confidence of a veteran. I gripped the ball, but my hands felt clammy.

I ran in for the first delivery, but my nerves got the better of me. The ball landed wide outside the off stump, short of a good length, and Rohit pounced on it, pulling it with ease to the boundary. The crowd erupted in cheers.

I stood there, motionless, as the reality of my poor start sank in. Rohit had punished my mistake, and the pressure of the moment felt overwhelming.

Before I could spiral into self-doubt, I saw AB de Villiers and Virat bhaiya jogging toward me. They both wore calm expressions.

"Hey, don't worry about it," ABD said with a smile. "It's just one ball. Shake it off."

Virat bhaiya added, "You're here because we trust you. Forget the crowd, forget the occasion. Just focus on your rhythm. Play like you usually do, and let the ball do the talking."

Their words were like a balm to my nerves. I nodded, exhaled deeply, and returned to my mark. As I prepared for the next ball, I reminded myself why I was here. This was the game I loved, and I had worked tirelessly for this very moment.

I ran in again, this time with more focus, and delivered a full-length ball. Rohit played it defensively, sending it back down the pitch. It wasn't a wicket, but it was a start. The applause from my teammates in the field lifted my spirits.

By the third ball of the over, I had started to find my footing. The noise of the crowd had faded into the background, and my focus was solely on the batsman at the crease—Rohit Sharma. The nerves were replaced with determination.

Virat bhaiya's words echoed in my mind: "Just focus on your rhythm."

I decided to switch things up and came around the wicket. The angle gave me a better line to attack the stumps. I took a deep breath, visualized the delivery, and started my run-up.

The ball left my hand just the way I had imagined. It pitched in line with the stumps and swung slightly back into Rohit. He misjudged the movement and failed to get his bat in place. The ball struck him flush on the pads.

For a split second, there was silence in my mind, followed by an instinctive shout that tore out of me:

"HOWZAT!!!"

The entire team erupted in a synchronized appeal, hands pointing skyward, faces locked on the umpire. Time seemed to stand still as the umpire thought it over. Then, his finger went up.

Rohit Sharma was OUT.

The realization hit me like a wave, and before I could react, I saw Virat bhaiya sprinting toward me, shouting in pure joy. He jumped in front of me, fists pumping in celebration.

"YES, AARAV! THAT'S HOW YOU DO IT!" he roared, grabbing my shoulders and shaking me with excitement.

I felt a surge of adrenaline. My fists clenched, and I let out a shout of pure aggression and joy. The team rushed in, patting my back and ruffling my hair. The energy was electric.

The crowd, stunned for a moment, erupted in applause as Rohit started his slow walk back to the pavilion. I stood there, soaking it all in—the cheer of the fans, the roaring encouragement of my teammates, and the undeniable thrill of my first-ever IPL wicket.

ABD leaned in and whispered, "Welcome to the big league, kid. That was brilliant."

I glanced over at Virat bhaiya, who was still grinning. "Keep it going, Aarav," he said, patting my shoulder.

I nodded, my confidence soaring. As I walked back to my mark for the next delivery, I couldn't stop the smile that spread across my face. The moment felt surreal, but it also lit a fire in me.

I was no longer just a debutant. I was here to make my mark.

With confidence surging through my veins after dismissing Rohit Sharma, I felt like a different bowler. The nerves were gone, replaced by sharp focus and a renewed sense of purpose.

The next batsman to walk in was Suryakumar Yadav, a dangerous batter with the ability to punish even the slightest mistake. I knew this was no time to relax; I had to stick to my plan.

As I walked back to my mark, I gestured toward the fielders. "Chris, head to deep covers," I called out. Chris Woakes jogged over, nodding in understanding. "Yuzi," I pointed, "go to long leg." Chahal moved into position without hesitation. The field was now set perfectly for what I had in mind.

I took a moment to breathe, visualizing the delivery I was about to bowl. It was going to be a slower inswinger—a ball designed to deceive the batsman into mistiming his shot.

I started my run-up with steady determination, my eyes locked on Suryakumar. As I reached the crease, I released the ball with a slightly adjusted grip to create the inswing. The ball came out slower than expected, angling in sharply as it approached the batsman.

Surya, expecting a straighter delivery, tried to hit it hard down the ground. But the swing and slower one caught him off guard. The ball veered off its intended trajectory, catching the inside half of the bat. It looped into the air, and for a moment, time seemed to slow.

All eyes were on Chris Woakes, stationed at deep covers. He tracked the ball, positioning himself perfectly under it. The crowd held their breath as he steadied himself, hands cupped.

SNAP! The sound of the ball hitting his palms echoed faintly even amidst the noise. Chris Woakes didn't falter; he completed the catch cleanly.

"YESSS!" I yelled, pumping my fist in the air with anger aggression on my face. The team erupted in celebration, running toward me. Virat bhaiya ran from his position to me and clapped enthusiastically, shouting, "Aarav, you beauty! Two in one over!"

ABD jogged over and patted my back, saying, "Keep bowling like this, and they'll never forget your debut."

I couldn't help but grin ear to ear as I walked back to my mark. My first over in IPL cricket had started with nerves but was now shaping up to be a dream. Two wickets in the over! The crowd roared louder than ever, and I felt unstoppable.

As I looked at Virat bhaiya for the next plan, he gave me a thumbs-up and shouted, "One more, Aarav! Let's finish this over strong!"

I nodded, adrenaline coursing through my veins. The moment felt surreal, but I knew this was just the beginning of something extraordinary.

The innings went on with the energy of the crowd never waning. Every ball felt electric, and I was in the zone. My confidence from the first over carried over into my next spell, where I managed to control my line and length with precision.

The opposition kept losing wickets at crucial moments, and although they had some notable partnerships, we never let them break free entirely.

When Kieron Pollard walked out to bat, the energy shifted. He was a game-changer, a batter capable of turning the tide in a matter of deliveries. I could feel the weight of his reputation, but instead of being intimidated, I channeled that pressure into focus.

It was my final over. Pollard stood tall at the crease, his imposing figure a reminder of his capability to send balls soaring into the stands. Virat bhaiya came over and said, "Aarav, stay sharp. Keep it tight. A dot ball here is as good as gold."

I nodded, wiping the sweat off my brow, and began plotting my strategy. Pollard was known for his power, so the plan was simple—don't give him any room to free his arms.

I decided to go for a precise yorker, a delivery that would test even the best. As I started my run-up, I blocked out the noise of the crowd and focused solely on the stumps.

I released the ball with everything I had. The seam stayed straight, and the ball dipped perfectly just before reaching Pollard. He tried to bring his bat down in time, but he misjudged the pace and angle. The ball sneaked through the tiniest of gaps between bat and pad and crashed into the stumps with a loud CLINK!

For a split second, there was silence—almost as if the entire stadium had collectively held its breath. Then, the crowd erupted. The sight of Pollard walking back to the pavilion was enough to send our dugout into wild celebrations.

Virat bhaiya rushed over, shouting, "Aarav! That was brilliant! What a ball!" He high-fived me, and the rest of the team gathered around, patting my back. ABD added with a grin, "You're making this debut unforgettable."

The remaining overs were handled well by our bowlers, and MI struggled to find boundaries in the death overs. By the end of their innings, they had managed 149 runs in 20 overs.

I finished my spell with remarkable figures: 4 overs, 16 runs, and 3 wickets. It was beyond anything I had dared to imagine for my IPL debut. As I walked off the field, the crowd chanted my name, and I couldn't help but feel an overwhelming sense of pride.

Virat bhaiya patted my back once again as we headed to the dressing room. "You've set the tone, Aarav. Now it's our turn to finish this game."

I smiled, my heart racing with excitement. This was the kind of day cricketers dream of, and I had just lived it.