

Cricket 77

Chapter 77

As the players gathered in the dressing room before the start of the second innings, the energy was palpable. Everyone had a role to play, and the instructions were clear. Virat bhaiya came up to me with a question that took me slightly off guard.

"Aarav, which position do you usually play at?" he asked, his tone casual yet focused.

"I usually play at number three," I replied, trying to keep my composure.

Virat bhaiya and Quinton de Kock walked out to open for RCB, and the match began with a roar from the Wankhede crowd. The pitch looked lively, offering both bounce and carry, making it an even contest between bat and ball.

The opening partnership started strong, with Virat driving through the covers elegantly and de Kock finding the gaps with ease. The scoreboard ticked along at a steady pace, and the team looked in control.

"De Kock has been timing the ball beautifully," the commentator observed. "RCB has got off to a decent start here, but they'll need to keep the momentum going."

However, just as things seemed to be settling, disaster struck. At the score of 37, de Kock attempted to flick a length ball off his pads but ended up mistiming it straight to the fielder at deep square leg. The catch was taken comfortably, and de Kock had to walk back after scoring 19 off 15 deliveries.

As the wicket fell, I was certain AB de Villiers would walk out next. But to my surprise, the team management decided otherwise.

"Aarav, you're up!" one of the coaches signaled to me.

I froze for a moment, the weight of the opportunity sinking in. This was it—my moment to prove myself. Picking up my MRF bat, I adjusted my helmet and gloves before stepping onto the field.

The atmosphere was electric, with thousands of fans cheering. As I walked to the crease, the commentator's voice filled the air.

"Here comes the young debutant, Aarav. He had an excellent performance with the ball earlier in the day, and now he has a chance to shine with the bat. He's got big shoes to fill, walking in at number three for RCB."

I took guard, tapping my bat nervously against the pitch. At the other end, Virat bhaiya gave me a reassuring nod.

"Take your time," he said calmly. "Just play your natural game."

The bowler, Jasprit Bumrah, was steaming in. Known for his accuracy and lethal yorkers, Bumrah was not someone you wanted to face on debut. His first delivery to me was a full-length ball, which I managed to dig out for a dot.

"Well negotiated," the commentator remarked. "That's not an easy delivery to face first up."

The next few deliveries were tight, with Bumrah keeping me on my toes. I managed to rotate the strike with a nudge to mid-wicket, bringing Virat bhaiya back on strike.

"Smart batting by Aarav," the commentary continued. "He's showing maturity beyond his years by not taking unnecessary risks early on."

Virat bhaiya, as expected, continued to anchor the innings, finding boundaries at regular intervals. His cover drives were a treat to watch, and the crowd erupted every time he pierced the gap.

"Classic Kohli!" the commentator exclaimed. "You can watch this man bat all day."

At the other end, I slowly began to find my rhythm. A half-volley outside off from the bowler presented an opportunity, and I didn't miss. Leaning into the shot, I drove the ball through the covers for my first boundary.

"What a shot!" the commentator said, clearly impressed. "That will give the young man a lot of confidence."

The boundaries began to flow as I settled into the innings. A pull shot off a short delivery brought another six, followed by a deft cut that raced past the point fielder. Virat bhaiya, seeing my confidence grow, came over during a break and patted my back.

"Keep going," he said with a smile. "You're batting brilliantly."

The partnership between Virat bhaiya and me began to build, and the scoreboard reflected our growing dominance. The commentators couldn't help but admire the synergy between the two of us.

"This is turning into a crucial stand for RCB," one of them noted. "The experienced skipper guiding the young debutant—it's a masterclass in teamwork."

The bowlers tried to break the partnership with variations in pace and line, but we managed to counter them effectively. I reached my maiden IPL fifty with a flick to fine leg, and the crowd erupted in applause.

"What a moment for Aarav!" the commentator exclaimed. "A fifty on IPL debut—this young man is making a statement."

I raised my bat to acknowledge the cheers, my heart racing with pride and excitement. Virat bhaiya walked over and shook my hand.

Aarav scored a 27 ball 50.

"Enjoy this moment," he said warmly. "You've earned it."

As the innings progressed, Virat bhaiya brought up his own half-century with a signature cover drive that raced to the boundary.

"Another Kohli special," the commentator said. "This man just doesn't know how to fail."

Eventually, our partnership was broken when I mistimed a lofted drive and was caught at long-off. Walking back to the pavilion, I was met with a standing ovation from the crowd and my teammates.

"Aarav has set the stage for RCB," the commentator said. "He may have missed out on a big score, but his knock has put his team in a strong position."

AB de Villiers walked in next, and the fireworks began. With Virat and AB at the crease, the bowlers had little chance of containing the runs. The duo played some audacious shots, taking RCB closer to the target with ease.

By the end of the innings, RCB chased down the target with several overs to spare. The team celebrated the victory, but for me, the match was more than just a win—it was the day I proved that I belonged on this stage.

The match was over, and RCB had emerged victorious. The presentation ceremony was underway, and the tension in the air had transformed into cheers and celebrations. I was still soaking in the moment when I heard the announcement:

"And the Player of the Match award goes to Aarav for his all-round performance with both bat and ball. A fantastic debut!"

The applause was deafening as I made my way to the stage to receive the award. The shiny trophy felt surreal in my hands, and the host handed me the microphone for the customary post-match interview.

"Congratulations, Aarav, on a dream debut! You took three wickets, scored a half-century, and helped your team clinch a crucial win. How does it feel?"

I smiled, still catching my breath. "Thank you so much! It feels unreal. Playing in the IPL has always been a dream, and to contribute to the team's success in my first game is something I'll never forget. All credit to the team and Virat bhaiya for trusting me with both the ball and the bat."

"You seemed nervous at the start of your innings. How did you settle in and start playing so confidently?"

"Yes, I was nervous, especially with the crowd and the pressure of expectations. But Virat bhaiya and AB sir gave me a lot of confidence. They told me to play my natural game, and that helped me focus. Once I got my first boundary, the nerves began to settle."

"And that first-over wicket of Rohit Sharma—what a moment that was! Talk us through it."

I laughed, recalling the moment. "Honestly, I was still in shock that Virat bhaiya asked me to bowl the first over. But when I got Rohit bhaiya's wicket, everything changed. It was a surreal feeling, especially celebrating with the team."

"Well, you've certainly made a mark tonight. Enjoy the moment, Aarav!"

"Thank you so much," I said, waving to the crowd as I stepped off the stage.

After the presentation, I noticed a group of players near the MI dugout. Among them stood none other than Sachin Tendulkar—the God of Cricket himself. Gathering every ounce of courage, I made my way toward him.

"Good evening, sir," I said, nervous yet excited. "It's such an honor to meet you."

Sachin smiled warmly. "Good evening, Aarav. I watched you play today—you were outstanding. You've got great potential, and it was a pleasure to see your all-round performance."

"Thank you so much, sir," I said, feeling like I was floating. "Hearing this from you means everything."

He placed a reassuring hand on my shoulder. "Keep working hard, stay humble, and always believe in yourself. Remember, cricket is not just about skills but also about mental strength. The way you handled pressure today shows you're on the right path."

I couldn't resist asking for his autograph. "Sir, could you please sign my jersey?"

"Of course," he said, taking the bat and pen. After signing, we took a photo together, which was the cherry on top of an already perfect day.

"Best of luck for the rest of the tournament," Sachin said before heading back.

"Thank you, sir. I'll do my best," I replied, still starstruck.

Back in the RCB dressing room, the atmosphere was pure joy. Music was blasting, and the team was celebrating the win with high spirits. Virat bhaiya and AB de Villiers were cracking jokes, and the entire squad joined in.

"You've set the bar pretty high, Aarav!" Yuzvendra Chahal teased. "We expect a performance like this in every match now."

The room erupted in laughter, and I couldn't help but grin. "I'll try my best, Yuzi bhaiya," I replied, joining the banter.

Virat bhaiya walked over with a smile. "Well done, champ. You've earned this moment. But remember, this is just the first match. Keep working hard."

"Yes, bhaiya," I said earnestly.

As the night went on, the celebrations continued, but amidst the noise and laughter, I took a moment to reflect. This day—this match—was more than just a debut. It was a dream come true, a step toward something much bigger.

I knew the journey had just begun, but for now, I let myself savor every second of this unforgettable day.