

Cricket 78

Chapter 78

The electric atmosphere at the Chinnaswamy Stadium set the stage for a thrilling encounter between Royal Challengers Bangalore and Delhi Daredevils. The stands were packed, the crowd was roaring, and every fan seemed to believe their team could triumph. As we took to the field, I felt the familiar rush of adrenaline coursing through my veins. This was cricket at its finest.

Virat bhaiya gathered us for the customary huddle, urging us to bring our A-game. "Stay sharp, boys! Stick to the plan, execute your skills, and let's make it count." His voice resonated with intensity, and we all nodded in unison. I was pumped, ready to make an impact.

Delhi Daredevils won the toss and elected to bat first. Jason Roy and Gautam Gambhir walked out to open for them, both seasoned players who knew how to pace an innings. I was brought into the attack early, and with the crowd's chants ringing in my ears, I marked my run-up for my first over.

The first few deliveries were cautious from Roy, but he was itching to break free. On the fifth ball of my over, I decided to mix it up with a slower off-cutter. Roy went for the big heave, but the ball deceived him, snuck past the bat, and crashed into the stumps.

"And he's gone! Aarav strikes! What a beauty of a delivery—Jason Roy completely foxxed. The young man is on fire!" the commentator exclaimed as I let out a roar of celebration. My fists clenched, I charged down the pitch, pointing towards the stands as if to say, "This is my house!" The crowd erupted in deafening cheers, and my teammates swarmed around me in celebration.

Roy's early dismissal put Delhi on the back foot, and Gambhir knew he had to anchor the innings. But I wasn't about to let up. In my second over, I pitched one just outside off, tempting Gambhir into a drive.

The ball had enough movement to catch the edge of his bat, and it flew straight to the safe hands of AB de Villiers at slip.

"Caught at slip! Gautam Gambhir has to walk back, and Aarav strikes again! This is top-class bowling from the youngster. He's got the crowd on their feet!"

I couldn't contain my emotions. I let out another aggressive roar, punching the air and thumping my chest. My teammates rushed over, patting my back and hyping me up. Virat bhaiya ran over with a wide grin, saying, "That's the aggression we need! Keep it up!"

With both openers gone cheaply, Delhi found themselves in a precarious situation. Rishabh Pant and Shreyas Iyer steadied the ship with a solid partnership, showing their class and grit. They played smart cricket, rotating the strike and finding the occasional boundary. Pant, in particular, was a menace, dispatching anything short to the ropes with authority.

"Pant is putting on a show here—this is fearless batting from the young man. But Bangalore won't mind as long as they keep chipping away at the wickets."

Despite their recovery, we managed to keep the scoring rate under control. Delhi finished their innings at 174/5, a competitive total but not insurmountable given our batting lineup. My final figures read 4 overs, 28 runs, and 2 wickets—a performance I was proud of but knew wasn't the end of the battle.

As we walked off the field, Virat bhaiya patted me on the back. "Well bowled, Aarav. You set the tone for us. Now let's chase this down."

The break was a blur of strategy discussions, energy drinks, and a steady hum of confidence in the dressing room. We knew the chase wouldn't be easy, but with our lineup and the form we were in, the belief was strong.

The second innings was about to begin, and the crowd's energy was infectious. I watched from the dugout as Virat bhaiya and Quinton de Kock strode to the crease, ready to take on the Delhi bowlers. This was going to be a spectacle, and I was thrilled to be a part of it.

The mood in the Chinnaswamy dressing room was tense. Losing both openers, Virat Kohli and Quinton de Kock, in the first two overs was a nightmare start for any chase. Quinton de Kock's run-out on 8 was a mix of poor judgment and brilliant fielding, while Virat bhaiya's dismissal to Maxwell for just 2 left the crowd stunned into silence. It was the kind of situation where champions are made.

As I walked out to bat, my heart was racing, but I could hear the deafening cheers of the crowd behind me. Standing at the non-striker's end was AB de Villiers, a man who could make even the steepest of targets look trivial. I took a deep breath and tightened my grip on the bat. This was my moment.

The first few deliveries were about settling in. The ball was swinging, the bowlers were aggressive, and the fielders were buzzing around like hawks. But then, something clicked. A short ball came my way, and instinctively, I pulled it over mid-wicket for six. The crowd roared back to life, and suddenly, the momentum began to shift.

"Take that! Aarav has announced his arrival with authority! That's a clean strike over mid-wicket, and the Bangalore crowd has found its voice again!"

AB looked over at me with a grin. "Keep going, kid. We've got this."

From there, it was carnage. The powerplay turned into a display of fearless batting as AB and I began dismantling Delhi's bowling attack. Maxwell came in to bowl the fourth over, and AB decided to take him on. A flat six over extra cover followed by a delicate reverse sweep for four left Maxwell scratching his head.

"What a shot! AB de Villiers showing why he's one of the best in the world. He's playing Maxwell like a violin!"

The next over, it was my turn again. Boult pitched one full, and I launched it straight back over his head for a towering six. The sound off the bat was pure, and the ball sailed into the stands, drawing thunderous applause.

"And there it goes! That's a shot of authority from Aarav. The young man is in the zone!"

Delhi's captain, Gautam Gambhir, was running out of ideas. The bowlers tried mixing up their lengths, but nothing seemed to work. AB was toying with the field, piercing gaps effortlessly, while I brought raw aggression to the crease. Together, we turned the game on its head.

In the seventh over, Chris Morris was brought into the attack. I knew he'd go for the yorker, so I stepped across the stumps early and scooped it over fine leg for another six. The crowd went wild, and I let out a roar, soaking in the energy.

"Unbelievable! Aarav with the audacity to scoop Chris Morris for six. This is incredible batting from the youngster!"

AB continued his masterclass at the other end, finding boundaries with ease. His ability to switch gears and keep the scoreboard ticking was mesmerizing. A flick off his pads for six over deep square leg was met with gasps of admiration from the crowd.

"The maestro at work! AB de Villiers makes it look so easy. He's batting on a different planet right now!"

By the time the 10th over ended, we were cruising. The required run rate had dipped significantly, and we were well ahead of the game. The Delhi bowlers were demoralized, and the fielders looked helpless. AB and I exchanged a fist bump mid-pitch.

"Let's finish this," he said with a determined smile.

In the 12th over, I decided to take on Harshal Patel. The first ball was tossed up, and I danced down the track to loft it over long-on for six. The next delivery was slower one, but I backed away and carved it over point for four. The crowd was on its feet, chanting my name.

"Aarav is putting on a show at the Chinnaswamy! He's taken Patel to the cleaners, and there's no stopping him!"

AB joined the party, smashing back-to-back sixes off Boult in the next over. One went over long-off, and the other sailed into the second tier at long-on. The partnership had crossed 150, and we were within touching distance of the target.

"This is carnage! AB and Aarav are rewriting the script here. Delhi has no answers to this power-hitting display!"

In the 13th over, I brought up my half-century with a thunderous pull shot off Boult for six. I raised my bat to acknowledge the crowd, who responded with deafening cheers. AB was quick to congratulate me.

"Well played, champ. Now let's finish it in style," he said.

Later, with just 10 runs needed off the last two overs, AB decided to end things early. A full toss from Rahul Tewatia was dispatched over mid-wicket for six, and a gentle nudge to third man for four sealed the game for us.

"Game, set, and match! AB de Villiers finishes it off in style, and RCB wins with 16 balls to spare. What a partnership, what a performance!"

I remained unbeaten on 84 off 32 balls, while AB scored a scintillating 79. The crowd erupted in celebration as we walked off the field, arms raised in triumph. It was a game for the ages, and I was proud to have played my part in it.

In the post-match interview, I couldn't hide my emotions. "It's a dream come true to bat with AB and contribute to the team's victory. The crowd's energy was unbelievable, and I just wanted to give my best."

Back in the dressing room, the atmosphere was electric. Music blared, players danced, and the sense of camaraderie was palpable. It was a night to remember, and one that reinforced why cricket is the greatest sport in the world.

The break before our next match against Chennai Super Kings was a welcome respite. The intensity of the IPL schedule can be exhausting, and these gaps allow players to recharge. Just as I was settling into the idea of unwinding and focusing on practice, my phone buzzed. It was an unexpected call from MRF.

"Hello, Aarav! This is Megha from MRF. We're thrilled with your recent performances and wanted to invite you for an advertisement shoot alongside Virat Kohli," the voice on the other end said.

I was both ecstatic and nervous. Sharing screen space with Virat bhaiya, not on the cricket field but for an ad, was something I'd never imagined.

The shoot was scheduled for the next day at a studio in Bengaluru only. As I walked in, the environment was buzzing with activity. Lights were being adjusted, cameras set up, and crew members moved about with a sense of urgency. Virat bhaiya was already there, casually dressed, chatting with the director. He spotted me and waved.

"Welcome, champ!" he said with a smile. "Ready for the first Ad shoot?"

I chuckled nervously. "I hope so, Virat bhaiya. This is my first time doing anything like this."

He clapped me on the back. "Don't worry. You'll be fine. Just relax and enjoy the process."

The ad was a simple yet impactful concept. It was about resilience and hard work, qualities MRF wanted to highlight through the campaign. The script required me and Virat bhaiya to exchange lines while showcasing some cricketing moves.

The first take began. Virat bhaiya delivered his lines effortlessly, his voice commanding and confident. Then it was my turn. I stood in front of the camera, my heart pounding.

"The journey to greatness begins with..." I started, but stumbled halfway, forgetting the next line.

"Cut!" the director called out.

I felt my cheeks flush with embarrassment. Virat bhaiya walked over, his expression calm and encouraging.

"It's okay, Aarav. The first time is always tough. Just take a deep breath and focus. Imagine you're on the pitch. The camera is just another bowler, and your lines are the deliveries. Play them with confidence."

I nodded, his words sinking in. We tried again, but this time, I fumbled on a different line. The pressure of the bright lights and the crew's watchful eyes was overwhelming.

After a few more unsuccessful attempts, I stepped aside, feeling defeated. Virat bhaiya followed me.

"Listen, Aarav. Everyone struggles at first. Do you know how many retakes I had to do during my first ad shoot? More than twenty! But you know what? It's not about perfection. It's about persistence. You've got this."

His words were a balm to my frayed nerves. He suggested we rehearse the lines together, away from the camera. He acted out my part, adding a touch of humor that made me laugh and relax.

"See? It's just like playing cricket. The more you practice, the better you get," he said with a grin.

We returned to the set, and this time, I delivered my lines without a hitch. The crew erupted in applause, and the director gave me a thumbs-up. Virat bhaiya clapped for me.

"Now that's what I'm talking about! Well done, champ," he said.

The next part of the shoot involved cricketing shots. This was my domain, and I felt much more at ease. We had to hit a few drives, with the camera capturing the perfect angles. Virat bhaiya's cover drives were as elegant as ever, and I matched his intensity with my own power-packed shots.

The final take required us to deliver the tagline together. "MRF—Fuel your journey to greatness!" we said in unison, pointing our bats toward the camera.

The director called out, "And that's a wrap!"

The crew broke into applause again, and I felt a wave of relief and accomplishment wash over me. Virat bhaiya walked over, putting an arm around my shoulder.

"See? I told you it'd be fun. You were great out there!"

"Thanks to you, Virat bhaiya. I don't think I could've done it without your support," I said sincerely.

"Always here for you, champ. Now let's go grab some food. I'm starving!"

As we left the studio, I realized how much I had learned in just a few hours. The experience had taught me not only about handling pressure but also about the importance of having a mentor who believes in you. It was a day I'd never forget.