

Cricket 99

Chapter 99

The stadium was electric.

The atmosphere was buzzing with tension, anticipation, and excitement.

I adjusted my gloves, rolled my shoulders, and tapped my bat against the pitch, setting my stance.

Ashwin stood at the top of his mark, twirling the ball in his fingers, his eyes locked on me.

He had just taken a wicket.

He was confident.

But I was ready.

The crowd was on its feet.

First ball.

Ashwin tossed it up, drifting it towards my leg stump.

Too full.

I sat down on one knee, my eyes locked onto the ball, and unleashed my power.

The bat connected perfectly.

The sound of the ball meeting the middle of my bat echoed across the stadium.

It soared high into the sky, the white Kookaburra ball disappearing into the night.

The crowd held its breath.

The fielders didn't even bother turning around.

It sailed over long-on.

SIX!

The stadium erupted in a deafening roar.

"AARAV PATHAK! WHAT A SHOT! FIRST BALL SIX!" the commentator screamed.

I pumped my fist.

Virat Bhaiya at the non-striker's end gave me a big grin.

The cameras zoomed in on Ashwin.

He took a deep breath, adjusted his field, and got ready for the next delivery.

I wasn't done yet.

I took my stance again.

Ashwin fired in a quicker one, targeting middle and leg stump.

But I was already prepared.

With a swift flick of my wrists, I guided the ball behind square leg.

It raced across the turf, beating the fielder in the deep.

FOUR!

The crowd went wild again.

10 runs in 2 balls.

I turned to Virat Bhaiya and smirked.

"I like this pitch," I said.

He chuckled.

"Then keep going, champ." and murmured something like Benstokes!

The stadium was alive with energy, the crowd roaring as I tapped my bat on the ground, eyes locked onto Mohammad Shami.

He had the ball in his hand, his run-up smooth and effortless.

At the non-striker's end, Virat Bhaiya took a quick single off the first delivery, looking at me with a nod.

"All yours, champ."

Shami stood tall at the top of his mark, gripping the ball tightly.

The tension in the air was palpable.

The fielders were spread out, the slip in place, and mid-on creeping up.

I adjusted my stance.

Shami took off.

First ball.

A rapid yorker.

Right at my toes.

I quickly brought my bat down, jamming the ball into the pitch.

The ball rolled back towards Shami, and he picked it up, giving me a sharp look.

"Aarav has been on fire today, but that's a peach from Shami!"

"Arre bhai sahab, dekh rahe ho? Ekdum missile phenki hai Shami ne!" Aakash Chopra hyped up.

("Wow, look at that! Shami has just bowled an absolute cracker like a missile!")

I smirked.

Next ball.

Shami ran in again, this time bending his back a little.

A short-pitched delivery.

It was fast, but it wasn't fast enough.

I saw it early, shifted my weight back and swivelled into a powerful pull shot.

The sound of the ball meeting the middle of my bat was pure bliss.

It rocketed over deep square leg.

The crowd ERUPTED.

"YEEEEES! OUT OF THE GROUND! CHHAPPAR PHAAAAAD SHOT!" Navjot Singh Sidhu's voice boomed.

"Beta, yeh SIX nahi, ye to TRAIN hai jo PLATFORM CHHOD CHUKI HAI!"

("Son, this isn't a six, this is a train that's already left the station!")

"Hawa mein ball nahi, Punjab Kings ka confidence udh raha hai!"

("The ball isn't in the air, it's Punjab Kings' confidence flying high!")

Shami just shook his head and walked back.

The cameras zoomed in on my face.

I was locked in.

Next over, Sam Curran.

A left-armer, he tried to deceive me with variations, but I danced down the pitch and lifted him for six over covers.

"Bhai sahab, maidan chhota hai ya shots bade hain? Kya lagaa hai! Rocket hai rocket!"

("Is the field small, or are the shots just massive? What a hit! It's a rocket!")

The Kings XI Punjab dugout looked tense.

Virat Bhaiya at the other end was grinning.

"Keep going, champ."

Murugan Ashwin came in next.

A leg-spinner.

I didn't even let him settle.

First ball? Reverse sweep for four.

Next ball? Inside-out over extra cover for six.

Andrew Tye tried his luck.

Another pull shot.

Another six.

The runs were flowing, the noise in the stadium deafening.

I raised my bat.

FIFTY IN JUST 18 BALLS!

"Aarav Pathak, naam yaad rakhna! Yeh ladka nahi, taandav macha raha hai!" Sidhu screamed.

("Aarav Pathak, remember the name! This isn't just a kid, he's causing a frenzy!" Sidhu exclaimed.)

"Ball ka Dard samjho doston, kyunki yeh maar nahi, yeh TOOFAN hai!"

("Understand the pain of the ball, friends, because this isn't just a hit, this is a STORM!")

I turned towards Virat Bhaiya.

He was clapping, shaking his head in amusement.

"Maza aa raha hai na?" (Having Fun?) I asked with a smirk.

"Bhai, tu alag level ka banda hai," ("Bro, you're on a whole different level!") he chuckled.

Virat Bhaiya was looking solid at the other end, playing the perfect anchor while I went berserk. The stadium was a sea of red, chants of "RCB! RCB! RCB!" echoing through the night sky. The scoreboard flashed brightly—8 overs gone, and Virat was on 48.

I took my stance at the non-striker's end, resting my bat on my shoulder, watching as Sam Curran ran into bowl.

Virat Bhaiya was calm, composed, and focused. The ball was just short of a length outside off, and he rocked back, cutting it fiercely behind point. The ball raced away to the boundary.

"Fifty for the captain! What a knock! 36 balls, pure class!" shouted the commentator.

"Aarav is all fire, and Virat is all ice. What a partnership!"

Virat Bhaiya raised his bat, acknowledging the crowd and the dugout. I clapped my bat against my gloves, nodding at him.

"Shaandar, Bhaiya!" (Amazing Bhaiya) I called out.

"Bas ab aage badhna hai, bhai." (Just Keep Going) He smirked, adjusting his gloves.

The next over, Ravichandran Ashwin stepped up, twirling the ball in his hands.

I took my stance.

First ball—defended solidly. I played it soft, watching the ball roll to short cover.

Ashwin smirked.

"Oh ho! Yeh Aarav Pathak bhi soch raha hai, 'ek over to main bhi shaanti se khelta hoon'" chuckled the commentator.

("Oh ho! Looks like Aarav Pathak is thinking, 'Alright, let me play one over calmly now.'")

Next ball—I took a quick single, pushing the ball into the leg side.

Virat Bhaiya now had the strike.

Ashwin tossed it up, inviting the big shot.

Virat obliged.

BANG!

Straight down the ground for SIX!

"Kya baat hai! Kohli ka classic lofted drive! Yahan koi scooty nahi chal rahi, yahaan toh seedha BULLET nikal gayi hai!" shouted Aakash Chopra.

(What a shot! Kohli's classic lofted drive! This isn't a scooter riding here, it's straight up a BULLET leaving the ground!)

Ashwin wasn't pleased.

Next ball—FOUR!

Drilled through extra cover, the timing immaculate.

The crowd exploded.

"Virat Kohli is turning it on! And Punjab are feeling the heat!"

Virat Bhaiya took a deep breath, waiting for the next ball.

Ashwin bowled fuller, and Virat nudged it for two runs, placing it perfectly in the gap.

"Clever batting, Kohli keeping the scoreboard ticking!"

Final ball of the over—a single.

Virat kept the strike.

Ravichandran Ashwin stood in the circle, arms crossed, frustration evident on his face. Every bowler he had thrown into the attack had been dismantled by this young beast standing at the crease. Aarav Pathak was batting like a man possessed, pure fire in his eyes, a hunger to dominate, a hunger to win.

"We need a breakthrough, yaar," Ashwin muttered to himself. If Punjab had to claw their way back into this game, they needed a miracle.

Thinking for a moment, he took a gamble.

"Sarfraz, one over for you."

Sarfraz Khan, usually a part-time bowler, was taken aback. "Me, bhaiya?"

"Yes, you" Ashwin said, eyes narrowing. ""Bowling tight, and try one or two variations. This is how we get him out.""

Sarfaraz took a deep breath, nodded, and walked up to his mark.

The entire Punjab team was confused. The crowd was confused.

""Is this a gamble, or is it Punjab's desperation?"" the commentator questioned.

I, Aarav, stood at the crease, watching Sarfaraz set his field. My heartbeat was steady, my focus sharp. It didn't matter who was bowling—I was here to dominate.

Sarfaraz ran in for the first ball.

It was a wide outside off, an attempted off-cutter meant to drift away.

But I followed it.

Stepping across, I bent low and played an audacious 360-degree shot, a pure AB de Villiers-inspired stroke, scooping it behind the wicket for SIX!

The crowd ERUPTED.

The entire Punjab team froze.

Ashwin's jaw dropped.

"Whaaaaat was that!?" screamed the commentator.

"Oh my god! He's just pulled off a shot straight out of the future!"

Ashwin muttered under his breath, "WTF was that shot... impossible!"

Sarfaraz looked at Ashwin, wide-eyed.

Ashwin just shook his head, his mind racing.

"Yeh ladka alag level ka hai..."

Sarfaraz Khan stood at his mark, gripping the ball tight, sweat forming on his forehead. He had just witnessed the unthinkable—Aarav Pathak scooping a wide delivery for six behind the wicket like it was the easiest thing in the world.

The Punjab players were stunned into silence.

Ashwin was still standing in the inner circle, completely shell-shocked. He had taken a gamble, and now it looked like it was about to blow up in his face.

Virat Kohli at the non-striker's end was grinning like a madman, his eyes filled with excitement.

"Aarey bhai, kya khel raha hai yeh banda! Yeh toh alag level ka confidence hai!"

("Wow, what a player this guy is! This is next-level confidence!")

From the RCB dugout, the entire team was on their feet. AB de Villiers had his hands on his head, shaking it in disbelief.

"Unbelievable! This kid is pulling off shots that only AB used to play!" screamed the commentator.

Chris Gayle, let out a booming laugh.

"Hah! The young blood is on fire! This is pure T20 madness, maan!"

KL Rahul, watching just smiled, shaking his head.

Sarfaraz ran in again, determined to make a comeback.

Second ball – DOT.

Sarfaraz pulled his length back slightly, forcing Aarav to rethink his stroke. I just nudged it back to the bowler, nodding my head.

Sarfaraz gulped.

The third ball, Sarfaraz tried to bowl a quicker one, outside off.

I moved across the stumps, got down on one knee, and SCOOPED IT AGAIN—this time over third man for SIX!

The stadium ERUPTED.

The Punjab dugout was STUNNED.

"Yeh ladka 360-degree batting karke humari band baja raha hai!" Mandeep Singh said, shaking his head.

("This guy is playing 360-degree batting and totally making a mockery of us!")

Fourth ball.

This time, Sarfaraz fired in a yorker at middle stump, hoping to cramp me for room.

I adjusted in a split second, changed my grip, and RAMPED IT OVER Bowler'S HEAD FOR SIX AGAIN!

Ashwin had his hands on his hips, completely speechless.

"Yeh toh bas mazaak bana diya hai bhai!" the commentator shouted.

("This is just ridiculous now, bro!" the commentator shouted.)

Fifth ball.

Sarfraz tried to bowl a wide, slow off-cutter, hoping I'd mistime it.

But I was waiting for it.

I stretched out, opened the bat face, and reverse-flicked it over point for SIX!

RCB DUGOUT WENT INTO CHAOS.

"PA-T-HAK! PA-T-HAK! PA-T-HAK!" the crowd chanted my name.

Virat ran up to me between balls and grabbed my helmet.

"Bhai tu insan hai ya alien!? Yeh kya batting kar raha hai!", Are you taking secret classes from AB?

("Bro, are you human or an alien!? What kind of batting is this! Are you secretly taking classes from AB?")

Last ball.

Sarfaraz took a deep breath, looked at Ashwin, and Ashwin just shook his head.

Sarfaraz bowled a slower one at off-stump, and this time, I let it go—DOT BALL.

I tapped the pitch and smiled at Sarfaraz.

End of the over – 24 RUNS.

I looked towards the Punjab Players.

Gayle was smiling his heart out.

KL Rahul just sighed, smiling.

Ashwin?

He was still staring at me, completely dumbfounded.

"This guy is something else..."