

Pressure just an excuse to practise more

OUR BUREAU

Virat Kohli thinks "pressure is a privilege" and it always helps to improve one's game. It affects the best, and he is no exception since he loves batting.

That too at a time when he is expected to enjoy his stint in the franchise league.

Even in this age of fearless cricket and the domination of Gen Z, the former RCB captain is proving that there's still room for sensible batting on a tricky wicket. His century, ninth in the IPL, against Kolkata Knight Riders in Raipur on Wednesday, showed that the old guard can still run the show. It was a show of vintage Kohli, who ruled the

world across all formats.

Failure still haunts and the prospect of a hat-trick of ducks probably made the 37-year-old feel nervous ahead of the game. When he finally got off the mark after two consecutive ducks, Kohli punched the air with a little fist-bump, which was more out of relief than anything else at the start of his innings.

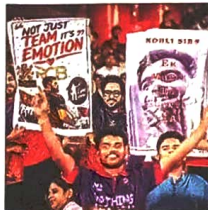
There was no flurry of fours and sixes as he took time to settle down while never allowing the run-rate to creep up in RCB's 193-run chase. His fifty came off 32 balls, and the hundred eventually arrived 28 deliveries later, yet the acceleration never felt frantic.

Of his 105 runs, only 62 came in boundaries, while the

remaining 43 came through singles and twos for strike rotation. He is third in the race for the Orange Cap, but there remains a possibility that he could still finish at the top.

"Virat Kohli was absolutely outstanding... He knows how to construct a chase better than most. When it comes to T20 centuries, he is third on the list with 10, behind Chris Gayle and Babar Azam," said Sunil Gavaskar. "Records are there to be broken, but it will take a very long time for anyone to match what Kohli keeps delivering, game after game, season after season..."

"He proved that the old generation is still the best. Even though the young stars are taking centre stage, the



Fans with Virat Kohli posters in Raipur during the RCB-KKR match. (Picture: RCB/X)

experienced greats are not done yet. This hundred from Virat Kohli was one of those special moments that remind us of his greatness."

The dropped catch off

Kohli hurt the Knights badly, but as the saying goes, fortune favours the brave.

"You cannot drop Kohli early in his innings. He will make you pay every single time... Give him an early lifeline, and he grabs it with both hands. He scored a hundred and made KKR regret that drop. That is what great players do. They don't give you a second chance. They punish your mistakes and turn the game on its head," Gavaskar said.

But there's no denying that Kohli gives his "heart and soul out there on the field".

The celebration of his century was subdued — just a raise of the bat and an acknowledgement towards the

dresser room, without even removing his helmet. Kohli acknowledged the pressure factor later.

"Well, there's a reason why people say pressure is a privilege. It actually keeps you humble, keeps you focused, makes you work hard at practice again. You can't take things for granted. Butterflies in the stomach, good pressure always helps you to improve your game. So I was in the nets working harder," Kohli said after receiving the Player of the Match award.

"Training harder, you tend to, when you're playing well, you can tend to kind of taper off a little bit with your intensity and focus. But I think a couple of games that don't go your

way, you start feeling a bit of nervousness again," he said.

"It helps you to go out there and work on your game and back yourself even more, which takes a lot of effort out of you. But then I think you go a level up as a player and then you keep improving your game little by little.

"And at the end of the day, when you look back, those failures are so important because they put you back into the place that gets you the performances in the first place and it doesn't let you go off your intense best. So I think that's why people say pressure is a privilege. And of course, I was nervous. I just wanted to get off the mark and just celebrate and have a bit of fun there."