



ENGLAND AND WALES CRICKET BOARD

PITCH REGULATIONS

2020

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Introduction

These regulations intend to pull together all relevant information that is appropriate to the marking and monitoring of pitches in both international and domestic cricket for the 2020 season.

In respect of domestic cricket, these Regulations shall apply in the following ECB competitions/matches:-

- (i) Bob Willis Trophy
- (ii) Vitality Blast

In addition, where appropriate (for example, the criteria for the rating of pitches):-

- (iii) Women's Elite Domestic Senior Competition

The implementation and use of Pitch Regulations for the 2020 season will operate differently, given the nature of the structure and format of the season.

For the avoidance of doubt, liability for pitch preparation is with the host venue.

INTERNATIONAL MATCHES

Both Test Match and One-Day International pitches are included within the protocol below:

Objective

The England Cricket Department will liaise with the home authority regarding the nature of the pitch and the practice facilities required for the international matches at that venue. Any communication from the home authority during the preparation of the pitch will be with the England Cricket Department or the Cricket Operations Department, who will pass on any relevant information as appropriate.

Monitoring Process and Maintenance of Standards

Quality of international pitches and outfield are monitored via an ICC Pitch and Outfield Report completed by the ICC Match Referee. A report on the preparation of the pitch is also submitted by the Head Groundsman.

ICC's Pitch and Outfield Monitoring Process is available [here](#) Additionally, ECB staging agreements lay down requirements for the venue in respect of pitch, outfield and other matters which should be referenced as appropriate.

Cores

Should a core need to be taken for analysis, it should be taken 2ft 6in in from each edge of the pitch, half way between the two ends of the pitch.

Covering

Covering regulations as laid down by ICC will apply.

Domestic Matches

Rating of Pitches

FIRST CLASS MATCHES (4 DAYS OR MORE)

Objective

Pitches should be prepared to provide an even contest between bat and ball and should allow all disciplines in the game to flourish. In all cases, pitches will be judged on how they play, and not whether they are dry or what colour they are etc.

In matches where a Match Referee is appointed, the Match Referee shall be ultimately responsible for the rating of pitches. In other cases, it shall be the Match Umpires.

Prior to the start of the match, the appointed Match Referee shall obtain pitch preparation information relevant to the match, including moisture and hardness readings.

Pitch Categories and Criteria

In accordance with the objective for the preparation of 4-day pitches, the following are the agreed categories and criteria for the rating of first-class cricket pitches.

Fulfilment of the lowest criteria will determine the overall rating for the pitch. For example, if the pitch demonstrates:

No unevenness of bounce at any stage throughout the match, and

At most, occasional seam movement at all stages of the match, and

Moderate turn from the protected area throughout the match BUT

Lacks carry and/or bounce on the first or second playing days of the match,

then it must be rated "Below Average" due to the failure to meet a higher carry and/or bounce criterion.

	Unevenness	Seam Movement	Carry and/or Bounce	Turn
Very Good	At most, occasional unevenness of bounce at any stage of the match	At most, occasional seam movement at all stages of the match	Good carry and/or bounce throughout the match.	A little or moderate turn from the protected area on the first two days, AND wearing to considerable turn from the protected area on the third and fourth days of play OR moderate turn from the protected area throughout the match.
Good			Average carry and/or bounce throughout the match.	Moderate turn from the protected area on the third or fourth playing days of the match.
Above Average	At most, more than occasional unevenness of bounce on the third or fourth playing days of the match.	At most, regular seam movement (at any stage) on only the first playing day of the match	Lacking carry and/or bounce on the third or fourth playing days of the match.	Little or no turn from the protected area throughout the match OR Considerable turn from the protected area on the first or second playing days of the match OR Excessive turn from the protected area on the third or fourth playing days of the match
Below Average	At most, more than occasional unevenness of bounce on the first or second playing days of the match.	At most, regular seam movement (at any stage) on the first AND second OR further playing days of the match	Lacking carry and/or bounce on the first or second playing days of the match.	Excessive turn from the protected area on the first or second playing days of the match.
Poor	Excessive unevenness of bounce for any bowler at any stage of the match	Excessive seam movement at any stage of the match		
Unfit	A pitch is rated unfit only if it is dangerous			

Clarifications

- Excessive means “(far) too much”. It is recognised that even on the best pitches a delivery can demonstrate “excessive” behaviour. In assessing a pitch rating therefore, “how often” must be considered along with “how much”.
- It is recognised that a limited amount of seam movement may occur early in the match and that a pitch may develop some unevenness of bounce for seam bowlers as the match progresses. This is acceptable but should not develop to a point where they would be described as “excessive” (or where ball is completely dominating the bat)
- When assessing the pitch, Match Referees shall:-
 - consider the balance between bat and ball
 - take into account the type, nature and identity of the bowlers
 - climatic conditions
- There is nothing wrong with a pitch that affords some degree of turn on the first day of a match though anything more than occasional unevenness of bounce at this stage of the match is not expected. It is to be expected that a pitch will turn steadily more as a match progresses, and it is recognised that a greater degree of unevenness of bounce may develop.
- Assessment of turn is from the protected area. It is impossible to quantify the amount that a ball is “allowed” to turn as bowlers will impart spin on the ball in differing amounts. Match Referees/Umpires shall take into account the type, nature and identity of spin bowlers when assessing the amount of turn that the pitch has demonstrated.
- A 4-5 day pitch must show a minimum of moderate turn at some point in the match to be able to be considered Very Good.

If it is not possible to make a reasonable assessment of turn because insufficient overs of spin have been bowled, then the ‘Turn’ column of the table should be ignored when providing the overall pitch rating.

In no circumstances should the pitch ‘explode’ / ‘go through the top’ though again, “how often” must be considered.

LIMITED OVERS MATCHES

Objective

For the duration of the match, the whole surface of the pitch should be completely dry, firm and true, providing good carry and even bounce throughout. There should be little or no turn and little or no seam movement.

In matches where a Match Referee is appointed, the Match Referee shall be ultimately responsible for the rating of pitches. In other cases, it shall be the Match Umpires.

(Note: The above statement is an *objective* - there is no stipulation that one-day pitches *must* be dry, though it is of course expected that this and the rest of the stated objective should be aspired to in the preparation of all one-day pitches. In all cases, pitches will be judged on how they play, and not whether they are dry or what colour they are etc).

Pitch Categories and Criteria

Fulfilment of the lowest criteria will determine the overall rating for the pitch. For example, if the pitch:

Demonstrates no unevenness, a little seam movement, lacks carry and/or bounce, BUT demonstrates considerable turn,

then it must be rated "Below Average" due to the failure to meet a higher turn criterion.

	Unevenness	Seam Movement	Carry and/or Bounce	Turn
Very Good	Little or no unevenness	Little or no seam movement	Good	Little or no turn
Good			Average	Occasional
Above Average	Occasional	Occasional	Lacking	Regular
Below Average	More than occasional	Regular	Minimal	Considerable
Poor	Excessive	Excessive	Very Minimal	Excessive
Unfit	A pitch is rated unfit only if it is dangerous			

Further Guidance for Umpires

As a matter of routine, the Umpires should immediately contact the Match Referee, or if not present, ECB Cricket Operations if at any time they are in any way unhappy with a pitch, regardless of the number of wickets that have fallen, or, when a Match Referee is not appointed, if they are going to or have rated the pitch “Poor” or “Unfit”.

Whilst Umpires are encouraged to discuss the overall quality of a pitch, they should provide an overall rating for the pitch independently.

Below Average, Poor or Unfit Pitches

ECB Directive 11 states:

“Each First Class County Club or Women’s Elite Domestic Senior Competition Team, Men’s Hundred Team or Women’s Hundred Team must comply with the provisions of the ECB Pitch Regulations as applicable to that Team”.

For the purpose of maintaining the highest standard of pitches in all matches, the relevant provision is the following:

Each County shall actively seek to prepare the best quality cricket pitch that it can for the match that it is staging.

For matches in the two First XI competitions (Bob Willis Trophy and The Vitality Blast), a pitch that has caused concern at any stage of the match shall be subject to an investigation by the Match Referee appointed to the match.

The Match Referee shall seek evidence from (not exhaustive):

- Home team Captain and Coach
- The Head Groundsman of the Home County and/or Groundsman of the Outground (interviewed together), or Hundred host venue
- The Umpires
- The Away team Captain and Coach (interviewed together)
- Television coverage

If, subsequent to the investigation, the Match Referee marks the pitch Below Average (as a result of seam movement, unevenness or turn), Poor or Unfit, the Match Referee shall consider:

- **Whether there were any circumstances relating to the preparation of the pitch that were beyond the control of the County, and**
- **Whether the County actively sought to prepare the best quality pitch it could for the match that it was staging.**

in order to assess whether there has been a potential breach of the above provision and therefore Directive 11.

The County may assert that the condition of the pitch was a result of an attempt or attempts to improve the quality of their pitches, in which case the investigation shall consider –

- **Whether the County was genuinely attempting to improve the quality of their pitches, and**
- **Whether the County acted reasonably in all the circumstances in staging the match on the pitch in question.**

If the Match Referee concludes that there has not been a breach of the provision and Directive 11, he shall report accordingly to ECB Cricket Operations.

In all cases of a Poor or Unfit pitch, or of a Below Average pitch (rated such as a result of seam movement, unevenness or turn), the outcome of the investigation(s) shall be discussed with the ECB Integrity Team who shall determine the course of action in accordance with Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) Regulations.

CDC Regulations in force from time to time shall apply in respect of procedures, penalties and costs, and appeals.

Cores

Cores shall not be routinely taken. However, should a Match Referee request to see cores, they should be taken 2ft 6in in from the edge of the pitch on a spinner's length at each end. They should be taken on the off-side to a right-handed batsman.

If a Match Referee is appointed to attend after the commencement of a Bob Willis Trophy match, he may request that two additional cores are taken. This will be done at the Umpires' discretion (the Match Referee should liaise with the Groundsman to arrange a mutually convenient time). The Umpires shall also be present, and the cores shall be replaced.

Pitch Protocol

The re-use of pitches – 4-5 day pitches

The following guidelines with regard to pitch preparation and the use/re-use of pitches in Bob Willis Trophy matches will apply for the 2020 season:-

(i) One-Day Matches prior to Bob Willis Trophy Matches

In the 7-day period leading up to a Bob Willis Trophy match, it is expected that a maximum of **one** one-day match will be played on the same pitch that is to be used for the Bob Willis Trophy match. Ultimately, the choice of pitch remains with the County and it is emphasised that re-using a pitch will not exonerate a County from a possible sanction as detailed in these regulations.

Counties are strongly advised to prepare an alternative pitch for the Bob Willis Trophy match in case the original pitch is damaged.

(ii) Consecutive Bob Willis Trophy Matches

It is expected that a second consecutive first-class match will not be played on the same pitch as the first within 7 days from the *scheduled* finish of the first. Ultimately, the choice of pitch remains with the County and it is emphasised that re-using a pitch will not exonerate a County from a possible sanction as detailed in these regulations.

Re-use of pitches – limited overs pitches

If possible, a fresh pitch should be used for one-day matches though it is understood that this is not always possible. Ultimately the choice of pitch remains with the County but it is recommended that only in exceptional circumstances should a one-day match be played on the pitch on which a Bob Willis Trophy match had just been completed (for example where the amount of play in the Bob Willis Trophy match has been severely limited and the pitch used is the best available for the limited-overs match). If this is the case, then the home County must notify the visiting team for the one-day match.

Surface Stabilisation Agents (SSAs)

ECB Directive 11 states:

“Each First Class County Club or Women’s Elite Domestic Senior Competition Team, Men’s Hundred Team or Women’s Hundred Team must comply with the provisions of the ECB Pitch Regulations as applicable to that Team”.

In respect of Surface Stabilisation agents, the provisions that refer are as follows:

Subject to the remainder of this paragraph, the application of Surface Stabilisation Agents (enzymes, PVA glue or similar) during the preparation of a Bob Willis Trophy pitch is not permitted. Specifically, this means that any pitch that has had the agent applied at any stage during the season in question (e.g. for use in other matches) may not be used for a Bob Willis Trophy match until 42 days after the conclusion of the match in which the SSA was used.

The application of Surface Stabilisation Agents (enzymes, PVA glue or similar) during the preparation of a 1-day pitch is permitted. However, the SSA must be applied uniformly across the length and breadth of the pitch. ECB Cricket Operations must be informed if a SSA is to be used.

Any Bob Willis Trophy pitch that is alleged to have been treated by an SSA shall be subject to an investigation by the Match Referee appointed to the match.

The Match Referee shall seek evidence from (not exhaustive):

- Home team Captain and Coach
- The Head Groundsman of the Home County and/or the Groundsman of the Outground (interviewed together)
- If necessary and at the discretion of the Match Referee/Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee, the Umpires
- If necessary and at the discretion of the Match Referee/Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee, the Away team Captain and Coach (interviewed together)
- Television coverage

The Match Referee investigation shall consider:

- **Whether an SSA had been applied to the pitch at any stage of the season in question and if so what was the date of the conclusion of the match for which such SSA application was made, and**
- **If an SSA had been applied to the pitch in respect of a match that had concluded within the 42-day period prior to the commencement of the Bob Willis Trophy match, whether the County had established on the balance of probabilities that there were sufficient extenuating circumstances relating to the use of the SSA.**

in order to assess whether there has been a potential breach of the above provision.

If the pitch in question is subsequently marked Below Average (as a result of seam movement, unevenness or turn), Poor or Unfit, it shall be subject to an investigation by the Match Referee appointed to the match, as per the investigation process set out in the **Below Average, Poor or Unfit Pitches** section above.

If the Match Referee concludes that there has not been a breach of the provision, he shall report accordingly to ECB Cricket Operations.

The outcome of the investigation(s) shall be discussed with the ECB Integrity Team who shall determine the course of action in accordance with Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) Regulations.

CDC Regulations in force from time to time shall apply in respect of procedures, penalties and costs, and appeals.

Covering the pitch and surrounding areas

Playing Condition 10 in each of the respective competitions refers.

Whales / Blotters

All Counties must have available at least one fully operational sit-on whale machine or Blotter. If this level of cover is not available, then both the opposition and ECB must be informed with reasons given.

Changing Venues

Bob Willis Trophy Playing Condition 2.6 refers.

Condition of playing area (includes pitch, square, outfield)

(Refer also Bob Willis Trophy Playing Condition 2.6)

ECB Directive 11 states:

“Each First Class County Club or Women’s Elite Domestic Senior Competition Team, Men’s Hundred Team or Women’s Hundred Team must comply with the provisions of the ECB Pitch Regulations as applicable to that Team”.

In respect of the condition of the playing area, the relevant provisions are as follows:

It is the onus of the Home County to ensure that no actions either prior to or during the scheduled period of the match shall materially adversely impact upon the condition of the playing area including pitch, square and outfield such that the possibility of play is substantially reduced.

- Actions that would be outside the Home County's venue's control would include the weather and other Acts of God. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.
- Actions that would be within the Home County's control would include the staging of events other than the International, First XI and Second XI and covering that does not meet the minimum requirement (Refer Bob Willis Trophy Playing Condition 10). This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Subsequent to a verbal or written report from the Match Umpires immediately that any part of the playing area is unfit for play and which the Umpires and/or Match Referee believe may be a consequence of actions within the Home County's control and materially reduced the possibility of play, an investigation shall be conducted by the Match Referee appointed to the match.

The Match Referee shall seek evidence from (not exhaustive):

- Home team Captain and Coach
- The Head Groundsman of the Home County and/or the Groundsman of the Outground or Hundred host venue
- The Umpires (who shall provide a written statement regarding the condition of the playing area and the circumstances surrounding it)
- If necessary and at the discretion of the Match Referee /Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee, the Away team Captain and Coach

The Match Referee investigation shall consider:

- **To decide whether the condition of any part of the playing area was legitimately judged as being unfit for play. In doing so, Law 2.7 should be strictly adhered to.**
- **If the answer to the above question is yes, it must be determined whether, on the balance of probabilities, any action taken by the County relating to the condition of the playing area had a material adverse effect on the possibility of play.**

in order to assess whether there has been a potential breach of the above provision.

If the pitch in question is subsequently marked Below Average (as a result of seam movement, unevenness or turn), Poor or Unfit, it shall be subject to a full investigation by the Match Referee appointed to the match, as per the investigation process set out in **Below Average, Poor or Unfit Pitches** section above.

If the Match Referee concludes that there has not been a breach of the provision, he shall report accordingly to ECB Cricket Operations.

The outcome of the investigation(s) shall be discussed with the ECB Integrity Team who shall determine the course of action in accordance with Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) Regulations.

CDC Regulations in force from time to time shall apply in respect of procedures, penalties and costs, and appeals.

Report Forms

Match Referees will complete a pitch report in respect of every match that they visit. The report will be forwarded to ECB Cricket Operations as soon as possible after the end of the match. This report will include information provided by the Head Groundsmen relating to the pitch and its preparation.

Should a Match Referee not be present at a match, Umpires will complete report forms for each match. Umpires should agree how the pitch has performed in each of the four categories (unevenness, seam movement, carry and/or bounce, turn) **but they should provide an overall rating for the pitch independently.**

Match Referees

Personnel

The following individuals will be acting as Match Referees in 2020:

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------|-----|-----------------|
| 1. | Tim Boon | 7. | Wayne Noon |
| 2. | Dean Cosker | 8. | Peter Such |
| 3. | Graham Cowdrey | 9. | Will Smith |
| 4. | Stuart Cummings | 10. | Alec Swann |
| 5. | Steve Davis | 11. | James Whitaker |
| 6. | Richard Ellison | 12. | Phil Whitticase |

Should any technical advice be required by a Match Referee, this shall be provided by the ECB Pitch and Grounds Advisor or his nominee.

Appointments

All Match Referee appointments will be made by ECB Cricket Operations.