



HIGH-PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF MEN'S CRICKET IN ENGLAND AND WALES

FINAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER
2022

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FOREWORD - SIR ANDREW STRAUSS

I believe we have an opportunity in the coming decade to create the greatest ever era of men's cricket in England and Wales.

While this high-performance review was commissioned on the back of another heavy away Ashes defeat for England Men, the recommendations don't just serve England. They come together to create what I believe is best for all concerned in Men's Cricket in England and Wales; England teams, counties, players, coaches, and fans.

We have set a clear ambition: **for England to be the world's best team across all formats within five years, for a sustained period of time.** Underpinned by a thriving domestic game.

It is my view that the only way to orchestrate such a period of success is to create a **truly aligned high-performance system across the whole of England and Wales.** This document sets out what we believe to be the fundamental changes required to achieve our ambitions and ensure that we continue to evolve a vibrant domestic game in the face of huge change and upheaval in global cricket.

Although many will focus on the recommendations around how we structure and schedule our domestic cricket, I would like to encourage people to consider our proposals as a holistic package – only with full alignment and commitment as a game will we achieve our ambition.

I am acutely aware of both the passion and strength of feeling around our domestic game. What I can guarantee anyone reading this review, is that our proposals for the domestic game are based on evidence as to where the gaps in the domestic game lie, both in standards and intensity, as well as firm principles around what high-performance systems require from their competitions.

What is clear is that the current schedule is not optimal and must change. Our proposals would safeguard first-class cricket, improve the quality of the first division of the County Championship as well as offering more during the heart of summer. They would improve the narrative of competitions such as the One Day Cup and the T20 Blast. They would improve links between the T20 Blast and The Hundred. They would address some of the concerns about the volume of cricket being played by reducing demands on multi-format players and ground staff as well as giving more opportunities for first-class cricket to be played throughout the season. Overall, we aim to raise both the standard and intensity of all our competitions; a positive for players, fans, and the whole game.

Ultimately success lies in the execution rather than the review itself. Support and buy-in is needed from the First-Class Counties on domestic game recommendations, while we look to the ECB to review and implement the rest.

I look forward to discussing these proposals with the game over the coming weeks and I appreciate that the First-Class Counties will want to consult their players, members, staff, and other supporters.

I firmly believe that if the game comes together, we will be able to achieve remarkable success on the field and create heroes in the process. If we want that to happen, in the face of a rapidly changing landscape, we need to act together now.

Andrew Strauss



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Men's High-Performance Review has set out an ambitious vision for men's cricket in England and Wales: to be the world's best team across all formats within five years, and to sustain it over time. That means winning World Cups, winning major Test series home and abroad, and inspiring generations through the way we win. Alongside that we want to ensure a thriving domestic game, which is engaging, meaningful and viable for all concerned.

All our recommendations are underpinned by six core principles, devised by an independent panel of experts. These principles come together to deliver high performance – in any sport.



The six principles of high performance

- 1 Extraordinary executive leadership:** requiring alignment across the game, diversity of thinking, and leadership that is ruthless about executing on a strategy.
- 2 Understanding and implementing 'What it Takes to Win':** requiring in-depth analysis on key success factors and embedding this knowledge across the game.
- 3 Effective talent identification and player development:** requiring high quality coaching, the training of key skills, and appropriate facilities and experiences for players.
- 4 Quality time on task:** requiring best vs. best competitions, conditions that help players transition to international level, and an appropriate balance of matches, training, and rest.
- 5 Picking the right players at the right time:** requiring clear selection criteria that is communicated to players and counties.
- 6 A strong performance culture in the team:** requiring inspirational leadership, physical and psychological resilience, and a forward-thinking dressing room culture.

We have concluded that the best way to achieve long-term success is to ensure that people across the game are working together brilliantly to deliver **an aligned high-performance system** across all of England and Wales. To create such an aligned high-performance system, we must have:

- 1 Focus and alignment on high performance across the game**
- 2 Players equipped to be successful in all formats, around the world**
- 3 A thriving domestic game that is best for counties, players, fans, and England Men's teams**
- 4 England teams that inspire by the way they win**

This Review has sought to deliver evidence-based recommendations, aligned to each of the four areas above and aligned to our principles.

Each of our seventeen recommendations are set out in summary form in the following table, with full details provided later in this report.

High-Performance Requirement	Recommendation	Through...
Focus and alignment on high performance across the game	1. Create accountability for men's high performance	A performance-focused Non-Executive Director on the ECB Board and a re-purposed Performance Cricket Committee
	2. Improve our shared understanding of 'What it Takes to Win' (WITTW)	Fully understand WITTW (for us) in all conditions, in all formats. Use this as a framework to align each element of the game
	3. Foster a high-performance community	Connecting performance roles within the game, improving knowledge-sharing and discussions about how to progress performance in English cricket
	4. Develop skills and diversity in performance leadership roles	Greater diversity of coaches, directors of cricket, and captains and tailored programmes to help them improve their leadership skills
	5. Reward performance impact	Evolving the County Partnership Agreement to link funding distributions to high-performance criteria
Players equipped to be successful in all formats, around the world	6. Challenge our bowlers to develop their global skills	A pilot use of the Kookaburra ball in domestic first-class cricket
	7. Give players access to experiences overseas	An overseas pre-season red-ball North vs. South competition, and improved access to overseas warm weather training facilities
	8. Provide earlier international benchmarking	A reinstatement of the U17 international programme and continuation of the U19 programme
	9. Refocus the Lions	An improved connection between the Lions and Senior England Team, increased player availability through improved scheduling, and greater focus on red-ball cricket
A thriving domestic game that is best for counties, players, fans, and England Men's teams	10. Produce a coherent domestic schedule	A better balance of matches, training, and rest, with first-class cricket throughout the summer and a One Day Cup competition in April
	11. Upgrade the standard and intensity of our competitions	A high-quality County Championship top division, a One Day Cup with the best possible players, and improved performance through a more balanced schedule
	12. Incentivise higher quality pitches	An objective pitch evaluation system and a bonus points system linked to scoring runs and winning
	13. Provide opportunities for talent and reward counties for development	Free loans of U21 players and a county-to-county compensation mechanism for those who develop and then lose players
England teams that inspire by the way they win	14. Sustain an exciting 'shop window' for the game	A clear style of cricket and inclusive culture that enables players to express themselves
	15. Enable England players to better manage workloads	Evolved central contracts and an appropriate balance between retainers and match fees
	16. Improve physical and psychological resilience	Systems that are focused on optimising England player availability and likelihood of peak performance
	17. Schedule international matches to allow players to play their best cricket, more often	Closer collaboration between departments and performance teams to strike the right balance of player, operations, and audience needs

THE PROCESS

Between May and September 2022, this review has undertaken a thorough process to reach its final recommendations.

- 1

Independent Expert Panel: to define the principles behind high performance, which have guided the recommendations of this review
- 2

Independent data analysis: to objectively understand the game's performance against the high-performance principles.
- 3

Broad insights: to gather game-wide insight and experiences, including from:

 - Players (current and past) & the PCA
 - Supporters, hearing from over 10,000 fans and members (through surveys by the Cricket Supporters Association and We Are England Supporters
 - Directors of Cricket, Head Coaches and Science and Medicine Staff
 - FCC Leadership (including CEOs and Chairs)
- 4

Consultations: to gather views from, and utilise the skills and experience of leaders in the game. In particular we conducted extensive formal consultation with Chairs, Chief Executives, and Directors of Cricket from every First-Class County, the MCC, National Counties and the PCA.
- 5

A collaborative process: We established a professional game working group comprising of county, ECB, and PCA representatives, as well as a sub-group of six First-Class County chairs that have met each month to input and advise

This process has culminated with a final set of recommendations, the majority of which are for ECB to decide upon and implement, with those on the domestic structure for the approval of the domestic game.

Independent Expert Panel

Sir Andrew Strauss (ex-England Captain, Chair of ECB Performance Cricket Committee)

Dan Ashworth (Sporting Director, Newcastle United Football Club)

Kate Baker (Director of Performance, UK Sport)

Sir David Brailsford (Director of Sport, Ineos)

Penny Hughes (Chair IQ Student Accommodation, ex chair of Aston Martin and The Gym Group)

Daryl Mitchell (Chief Operating Officer, Professional Cricketers' Association)

Marcus North (Director of Cricket, Durham CCC)

Simon Timson (Performance Director, Manchester City)

ECB Members: Rob Key (Managing Director, England Men's Cricket), Mo Bobat (England Men's Cricket Performance Director), Vikram Banerjee (ECB Director of Strategy), Neil Snowball (MD, County Cricket)

We have not considered junior cricket and the county talent pathway, although the link between high performance and these areas of the game is being considered through a separate piece of work



WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

A successful, inspiring England team is central to the health of cricket in England and Wales and is a core priority within the game's Inspiring Generations Strategy. We only need to consider the impact of the 2019 ICC World Cup, where countless engagement records were broken as **15.4m** people watched England win the trophy and cricket captured the attention of the nation.

Therefore, our ambition to establish the greatest, sustained era of English cricket is not solely about the success of the England team, but about the success of the game overall.

In addition, the context of cricket today is fuelling the importance of this review...

1 ENGLAND MEN HAVE NOT MANAGED A PERIOD OF EXTENDED SUCCESS IN THE MODERN ERA

The England Men's team has enjoyed times of great success - highlighted by the 2005 and 2010/11 Ashes and the 2019 ICC Men's World Cup - without ever sustaining it across all formats over a long period. We have also seen excellent results for the Men's Test team this summer.

2 THE EVER-EVOLVING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE THREATENS OUR DOMESTIC STRUCTURES AND ENGLAND TEAMS

Global cricket appears to be at a tipping point. With the proliferation of franchise T20 tournaments around the world (13 major tournaments expected in 2023) the opportunities for talented young cricketers are significant. This review has not focused on the global cricketing landscape per se, but has taken into consideration the impact it could have on our domestic and national teams.



We define being the best in the world as being #1 in at least one format, and top three in the others. Since April 2000, Australia have achieved this for much longer than England.



8 MONTHS



123 MONTHS

*In Test cricket, determined by the ICC Men's Test Team Rankings. In ODI & T20 cricket, determined by ICC World Cup. Excludes T20 cricket before 2007.

3

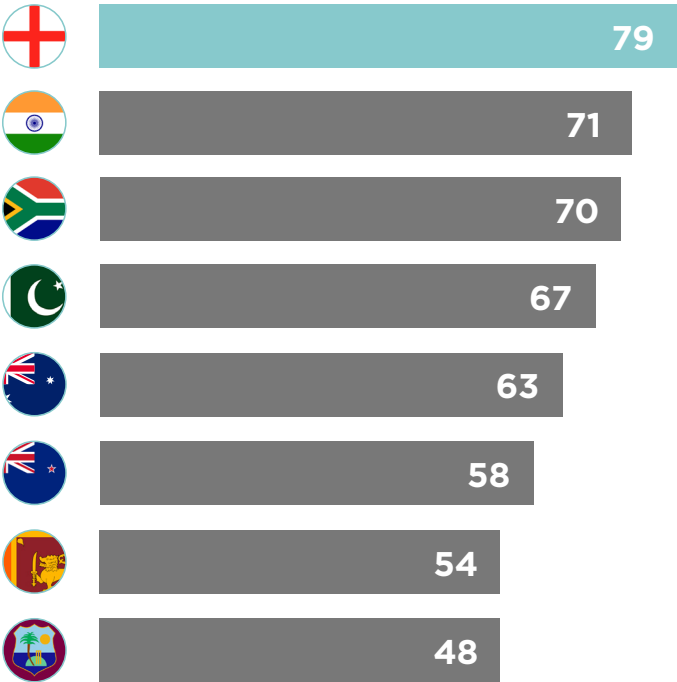
WE HAVE HEARD LOUD AND CLEAR THAT THE STATUS QUO IN DOMESTIC CRICKET IS NOT SERVING THE GAME - WE PLAY TOO MUCH DOMESTIC CRICKET IN AN UNBALANCED SCHEDULE

There is broad agreement within the game that we play too much cricket, and the cricket we do play is scheduled in a way that totally undermines performance.

The players have told us that less cricket is critical to protecting the standard and intensity of competition, while 94% of county Directors of Cricket (DoC) have said that we play too much cricket and they don't get enough time to review matches to work with their players in training during the season.

Our research though this review unequivocally supports those views.

DAYS OF CRICKET
AVERAGE PER DOMESTIC TEAM



AVERAGE DAYS PER
DOMESTIC PLAYER



“A reduction to the amount of cricket played was viewed as essential and more of a key principle rather than a compromise”

Feedback from PCA consultations with players

1 in 2

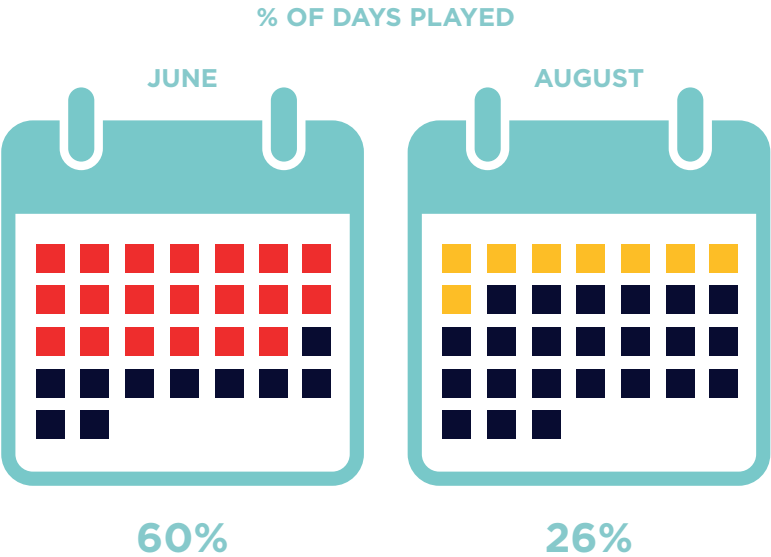
the average number of days where teams in England & Wales are playing over the course of the season

vs

1 in 3

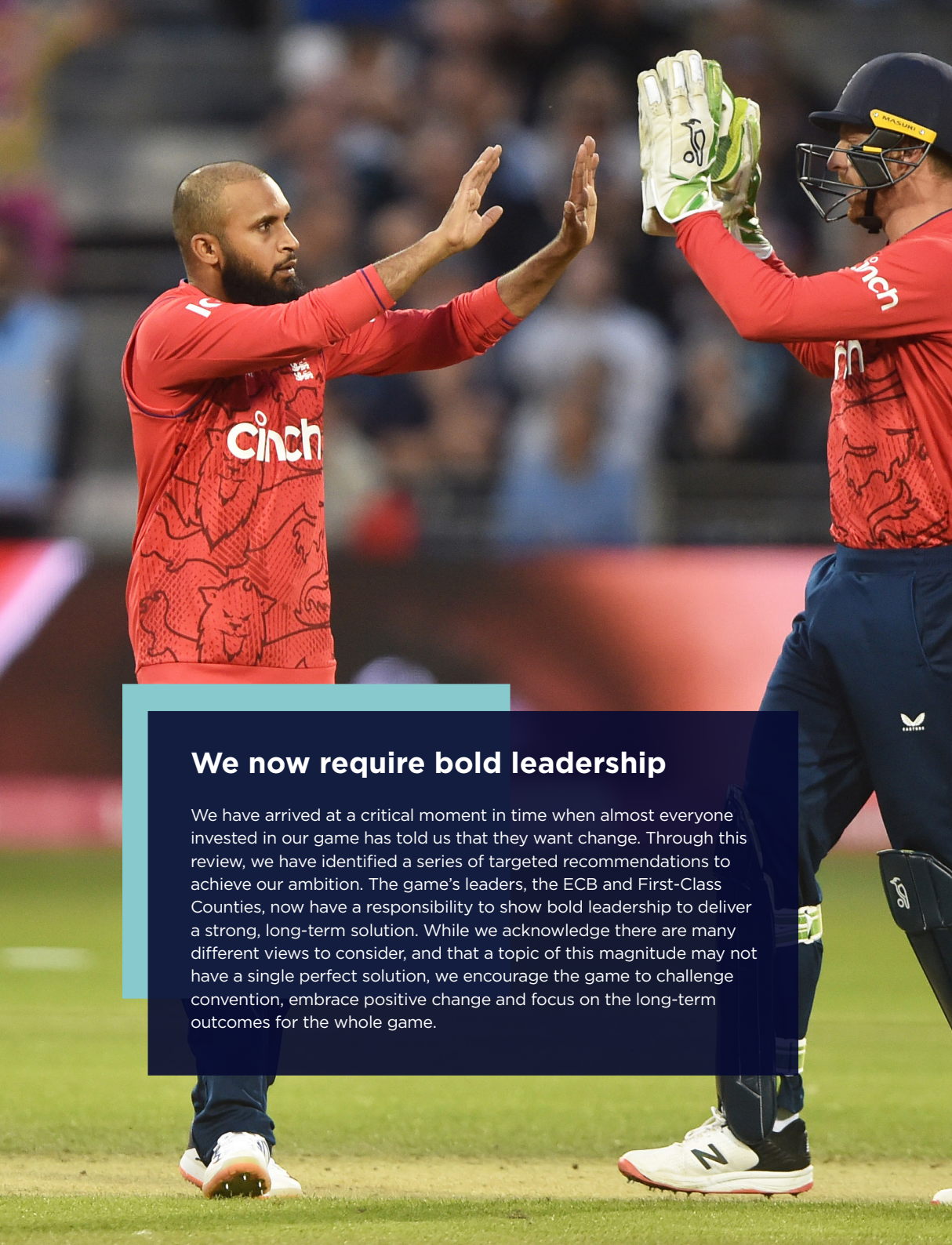
days in all other countries

What's more, the volume of cricket is not evenly spread throughout the season, producing both pinch points - where the intensity of competition is undermined by tired cricketers - and periods where there is clearly insufficient cricket. This season, teams played up to 18 days of cricket in June, but as little as 8 days in August. This is not just true in domestic cricket but international cricket too, with England's white ball teams playing 12 matches in 25 days in July 2022.



By playing less cricket and scheduling it better throughout the domestic season we allow players and coaches more time to train, rest and review so that they are better prepared to play at their peak. We must also give ground staff more time to produce pitches that better reflect international conditions.

The clearest conclusion to emerge from our work has been simple: the status quo is not an option. Everyone in the game is telling us this. We have listened, we must now act.



We now require bold leadership

We have arrived at a critical moment in time when almost everyone invested in our game has told us that they want change. Through this review, we have identified a series of targeted recommendations to achieve our ambition. The game's leaders, the ECB and First-Class Counties, now have a responsibility to show bold leadership to deliver a strong, long-term solution. While we acknowledge there are many different views to consider, and that a topic of this magnitude may not have a single perfect solution, we encourage the game to challenge convention, embrace positive change and focus on the long-term outcomes for the whole game.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We have identified seventeen key recommendations as part of our review, each aligned to one of the four key requirements for a successful high-performance system.

Area of High-Performance Strategy	Recommendation
Focus and alignment on high performance across the game	1. Create accountability for men's high performance
	2. Improve our shared understanding of 'What it Takes to Win' (WITTW)
	3. Foster a high-performance community
	4. Develop diverse skills in performance leadership roles
	5. Reward performance impact
Players equipped to be successful in all formats, around the world	6. Challenge our bowlers to develop their global skills
	7. Give players access to experiences overseas
	8. Provide earlier international benchmarking
	9. Refocus the Lions
A thriving domestic game that is best for counties, players, fans, and England Men's teams	10. Produce a coherent domestic schedule
	11. Upgrade the standard and intensity of our competitions
	12. Incentivise higher quality pitches
	13. Provide opportunities for talent and reward counties for development
England teams that inspire by the way they win	14. Sustain an exciting 'shop window' for the game
	15. Enable players to better manage workload
	16. Improve physical and psychological resilience
	17. Schedule international matches to allow players to play their best cricket, more often

The following sections in this paper set out the details of these recommendations and our supporting evidence and rationale.

FOCUS AND ALIGNMENT ON HIGH PERFORMANCE ACROSS THE GAME



Sustained success can only be achieved if there is focus and alignment throughout the sport behind a culture of high performance. Any team without this can have its successful moments but will never be able to hold a position at the top.

We have identified two principles that underpin the ability to create focus and alignment, based on what has driven success in other sports. These are:

- **Extraordinary executive leadership**
- **Understanding and implementing what it takes to win**

Within this area we have set out five key recommendations.

1. **Create accountability for men's high performance**
2. **Improve our shared understanding of 'What it Takes to Win' (WITTW)**
3. **Foster a high-performance community**
4. **Develop diverse skills in performance leadership roles**
5. **Reward performance impact**

RECOMMENDATION: 1

CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MEN'S HIGH PERFORMANCE

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- The introduction of a High Performance Non-Executive Director (NED) role on the ECB Board
- The Performance Cricket Committee (PCC) to be re-purposed with a single strategic focus on enabling successful England teams and delivery of this plan
- The creation of an expert panel from outside of cricket - 'Performance Advisory Group' (PAG) - to support and advise the PCC

OUR RATIONALE

For any area of a business to be successful, it is important for the organisation's leadership to have strong expertise, defined accountability, targeted focus and clear decision-making processes.

However, at present there is no full ECB Board Member with accountability for high performance and the ECB Performance Cricket Committee currently has a wide remit, diluting its focus. As a result, there is not enough long-term focus given to maintaining an aligned high-performance system that would be capable of supporting our ambition.

Defining a clear role for a High Performance NED, narrowing the focus of the Performance Cricket Committee and using external experts to challenge and advance ECB's thinking will help embed the required accountability and focus at the ECB.

RECOMMENDATION: 2 | IMPROVE OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF 'WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN'

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Update What it Takes to Win (WITTW) research on the batting and bowling skills required to win in Test and limited overs cricket. This includes broadening the analysis to include a deeper understanding of the physical and psychological factors that predict how well a player may perform in elite cricket
- Embed the game's WITTW analysis into the ECB coaching curriculum and the wider network ethos
- Implement mobile ball tracking technology within the domestic game to ensure that any WITTW skills are measured objectively

OUR RATIONALE

Honing our collective understanding of the key success factors is fundamental to how we identify, develop, and provide opportunities to talent. In other sports, this is known as a 'What it takes to win' (WITTW) analysis, and has been critical in the success of other teams and athletes, including in tennis and football. It provides a 'north star' which everyone in the organisation can refer back to and ensure complete alignment.

Cricket's understanding of WITTW is improving through ECB conducted research over recent years. However, it has not had a widespread implementation across the game, and requires both updating and broadening to get a holistic view of what skills and attributes players and teams need to succeed both at international and domestic level. WITTW research needs to bind those in performance roles – coaches, players, directors of cricket and others – around a common language and a common process to monitor and evaluate players.



“What it Takes to Win analysis has been critical to the success of other sports, including athletics, tennis and football”

RECOMMENDATION: 3

**FOSTER A HIGH-PERFORMANCE
COMMUNITY**

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Establish a community for high performance, connecting individuals and leaders in relevant roles – coaches, directors of cricket, ground staff, and so on
- Ensure regular communications between these roles, and explore the holding of an annual performance summit
- Much of the communication to centre on sharing and embedding the WITTW framework

OUR RATIONALE

While there will always be competitive tension in any sport, leaders in performance roles recognise the importance of sharing ideas and best practice to deliver what is best for their players, as well as collectively trying to move forward research and thinking on performance.

“A well-functioning high-performance system has individuals in performance roles in constant dialogue about moving the game forward”

RECOMMENDATION: 4**DEVELOP DIVERSE SKILLS IN
PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP ROLES****OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS**

- Expand the existing ECB development programmes to focus on leadership development of directors of cricket, coaches, and captains. Programmes to focus on individualised development rather than classroom-based learning
- Increase the diversity of people in our high-performance roles (as aligned to the game's EDI objectives)

OUR RATIONALE

We recognise that the game could do more to support professional development of our performance leaders (such as directors of cricket, captains, and coaches) beyond technical skills. The pressure and scrutiny of the modern game requires these individuals to be able to lead diverse teams, and the game should do everything it can to prepare them for this challenge.

This follows on from the best practice example set by a number of other sports, including the Football Association.

In addition, we face a challenge in the lack of diversity in performance roles in cricket. We must do more to support and champion high potential individuals from all backgrounds who could become future leaders in cricket performance. This will come through initiatives such as development and mentoring of young potential leaders, fairer recruitment practices and education – amongst other steps to make our game more inclusive.



“The pressure and scrutiny of the modern game requires directors of cricket, captains, and coaches to be able to lead diverse teams”



“We could do more to reward those who are contributing to our high-performance system. Introducing greater performance-related distributions will drive greater alignment while ensuring that FCCs retain strategic freedom to define and pursue their own path, and maximising what they are good at”

RECOMMENDATION: 5 | REWARD PERFORMANCE IMPACT

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- We recommend that from 2025 a significant proportion of the funding that ECB distributes to counties via the County Partnership Agreement should be performance related, based on an agreed set of metrics on the levels of contribution to the broader strategy

OUR RATIONALE

To truly develop an aligned performance system, it is important that county organisations are incentivised and rewarded for providing positive contributions to the game. At the moment we could do more to reward those who are contributing to our high-performance system, and challenge those who are not providing as much impact. Currently the majority of funding is ‘core funding’ based on minimum standards.

Introducing greater performance-related distributions will drive greater alignment throughout the county system on the goals we are seeking to achieve while ensuring that FCCs retain strategic freedom to define and pursue their own purpose/path, and maximising what they are good at. These metrics could include contributing to the development of professional and England cricketers and winning on the field.

Note: While this review is focused on achieving success in the high-performance system, we also believe that the concept behind impact-based reward is one that the game is looking to adopt across other elements of cricket where an aligned, collective approach is desired. E.g. delivering cricket’s Inspiring Generations strategy, transforming cricket’s approach to EDI



PLAYERS EQUIPPED TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN ALL FORMATS, AROUND THE WORLD

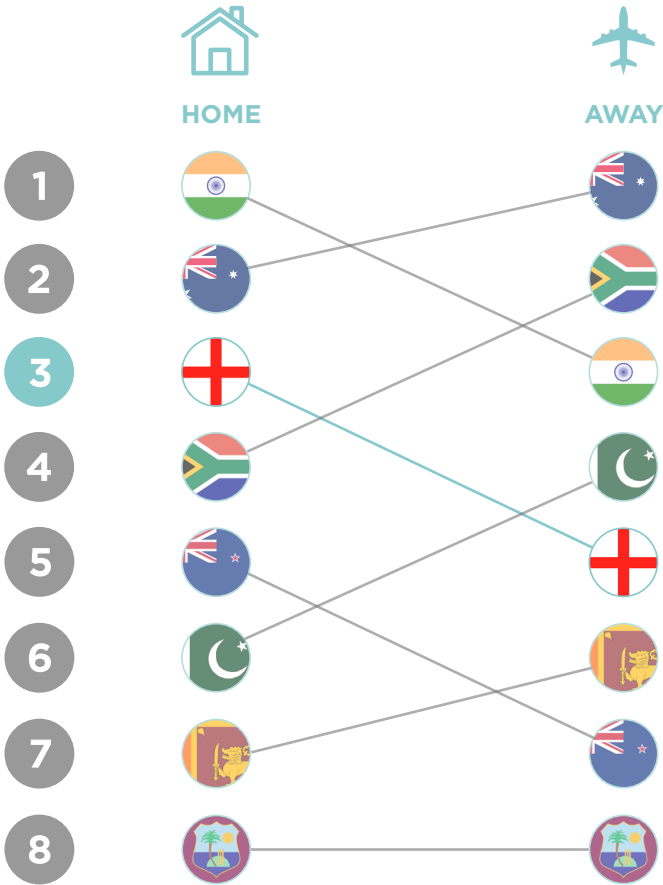
The independent expert panel identified **Effective Talent ID and Player Development** as one of the six principles of high performance, with an emphasis on giving talented cricketers access to relevant, global experience, and a chance to develop the specific skills required to be successful in international cricket around the world. These would combine to create players who are better able to step into the international level, anywhere.

Our domestic game is critical to developing our players, but it is not the only environment for development. Since 2000, England have been comparatively better at home than away. We therefore need to consider a complementary set of experiences outside the domestic game that will give our players the skills and experience to succeed away from home.

The next four recommendations, relating to skill development, are as follows:

- 6. Challenge our bowlers to develop their global skills
- 7. Give players access to experiences overseas
- 8. Provide earlier international benchmarking
- 9. Refocus the Lions

TEST WIN-LOSS RECORD SINCE 2000



RECOMMENDATION: 6

CHALLENGE OUR BOWLERS TO
DEVELOP THEIR GLOBAL SKILLS

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

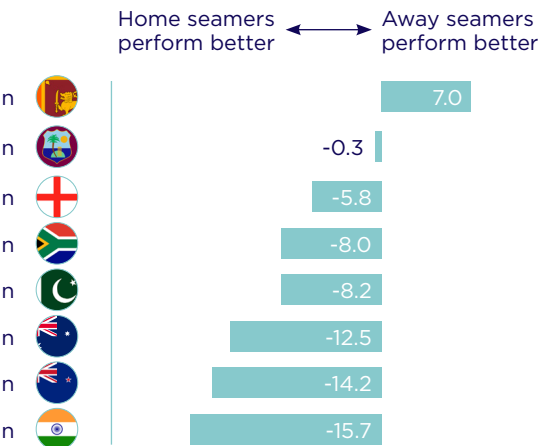
- Trial the use of the Kookaburra ball in the County Championship cricket to test the impact on bowlers' skills development

OUR RATIONALE

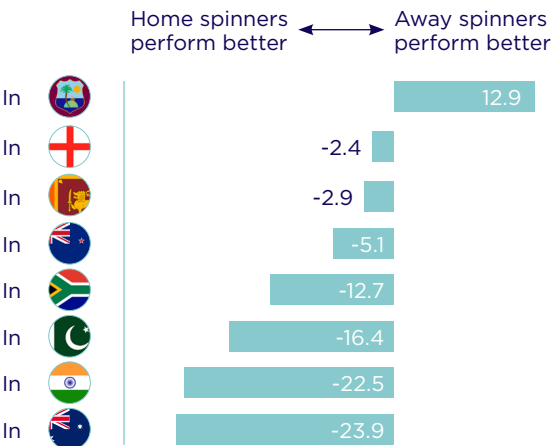
We know that to achieve our ambition we need to develop skills that allow us to be dominant at home and win Test Series abroad.

Our home advantage with the ball in Test matches is not as strong as it could be. Our seam bowlers do perform better in England and Wales compared to our opposition. However, our home advantage is smaller than most other nations.

DIFFERENCE IN SEAM BOWLING AVERAGE
SINCE 2014 - HOME TEAM VS. AWAY TEAM
WHEN BOWLING IN...



DIFFERENCE IN SPIN BOWLING AVERAGE
SINCE 2014 - HOME TEAM VS. AWAY TEAM
WHEN BOWLING IN...



Further, our seamers struggle much more away from home, compared to other nations. In fact, only West Indies and New Zealand have seen a bigger worsening of bowling averages away from home since 2014. The same is true for spinners, with only the West Indies having a worse 'home advantage' in this discipline.



We know that there is a major distinction between the type of bowling in English domestic cricket and international cricket. In our domestic game, under 20% of deliveries exceed 135 km/h (84 mp/h), compared to over 40% of deliveries in Test cricket, yet bowling averages are similar in both. Spinners bowl just 22% of overs in England – the lowest of any domestic system – compared to 41% internationally.

These numbers point to the fact that we aren't encouraging the development of the "extreme" skills required to succeed in international cricket. In domestic cricket it is possible to be successful, especially as a seamer, bowling at slower speeds with less accuracy than is required at Test level. This in turn diminishes the need for spinners.

This distinction between domestic and international cricket is potentially because of three factors. First, our bowlers may not be being coached based on the skills we know are needed to succeed in international cricket. Recommendation 2 will address this, by embedding the What it Takes to Win analysis into our coaching curriculum. Second, our pitches in domestic cricket may not encourage these skills. We aim to address this in recommendation 13.

Finally, the ball we use may play a role. The Dukes ball has a reputation for more movement for more overs, compared to the Kookaburra ball which is used in many other countries. This extra movement may also limit the need for extreme skill development of seam bowlers, but also limit opportunities for spinners due to the success of seamers domestically.

We don't know to what extent the ball has a part to play, but we want to test whether using a Kookaburra will help to develop "What it Takes to Win" bowling attributes, for both pace and spin bowling. Thus, we believe a trial will give us a deeper understanding of this.

We therefore propose a pilot trial of the use of the Kookaburra ball in the County Championship. Our hypothesis is that using the Kookaburra ball may:

- Make it harder for seamers to take wickets – forcing the development of a wider range of skills as required at international level (e.g. extreme pace or accuracy)
- Negate the dominance of seamers in domestic cricket, increasing the need for spinners to take wickets and develop their skills
- Extend more games into a final day, again enhancing the role of spin bowlers
- Give all domestic bowlers experience in using the same ball as they will be required to use in overseas international cricket

After the pilot, we will have a firmer understanding of whether the Kookaburra ball has an impact on the above, which will then inform whether to implement a longer-term change within domestic cricket.



"We aren't encouraging the development of the "extreme" skills required to succeed in international cricket. We want to test whether using a Kookaburra will help to develop "What it Takes to Win" bowling attributes, for both pace and spin bowling"

RECOMMENDATION: 7

GIVE PLAYERS ACCESS TO EXPERIENCES OVERSEAS

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Play an annual red-ball series between North vs. South in overseas conditions in pre-season
- Data-led selection/qualification for North vs South, based on previous year's performances in the County Championship
- Secure access to best-in-class warm weather training facilities overseas, to be used by England teams and First-Class Counties players for training experiences and to prepare for tours

OUR RATIONALE

Winning away from home is critical to England's ambition to become best in the world across all formats, and has proved especially challenging in Test cricket.

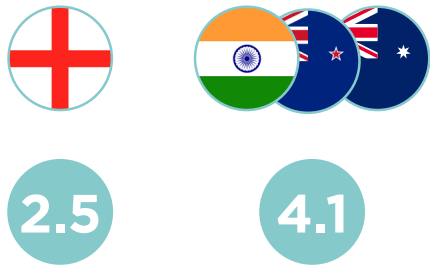
Playing games abroad can help develop the skills and experience required to thrive in overseas Test matches. Yet, our debutants often have less experience than those of their compatriots from other nations.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HOME AND AWAY TEST BATTING AVERAGES

Batters with more overseas experience pre-debut have had less of a drop off in batting average in away conditions



OVERSEAS FIRST CLASS EXPERIENCE PRE-TEST DEBUT



AVERAGE NUMBER OF MATCHES PER PLAYER

We know that this logic is also true in white ball cricket but due to the access to global T20 leagues, most of our best young white ball cricketers are able to seamlessly transfer into international cricket.

A high-quality North v South competition will help provide players with preparation for Test cricket. It will provide opportunities for players to aspire to at the start of any season as well as enable improved England selection by giving staff the opportunity to work with and understand the qualities of more players in more conditions (important as the volume of cricket England play necessitates knowing more about a greater number of players).

Access to best-in-class warm-weather training facilities, to go alongside our Loughborough facility, will enable England to be better prepared for overseas tours, including enabling players to develop their fitness and bowlers to build their bowling loads in appropriate conditions.



RECOMMENDATION: 8 | PROVIDE EARLIER INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Develop an U17s England programme with matches overseas against international opposition

OUR RATIONALE

Playing international cricket puts players under the spotlight and comes with its own unique pressures and challenges that can be difficult for a player who has not been nurtured into that environment.

The U19s has played a positive role in helping future England players acclimatise to these challenges. However, players do not currently get these experiences until they reach U19 cricket, and are not able to benchmark themselves internationally, nor gain meaningful overseas experience, before this level. Football has set the standard of best practice in international sport, with all major nations fielding U17 teams and competing in World and European competitions at this level.

Therefore, in addition to the existing U19s, we propose that a full U17s programme is developed.



Case Study: The Football Association

In 2012, The Football Association sought to understand the continued underachievement by men's England teams in international tournaments.

Their analysis focused on the key success factors of leading European and global nations, and identified a range of attributes that these teams had where England were falling short. One of the biggest observations was that these teams excelled in youth age groups. Rival countries consistently demonstrated strong performance at junior levels, gave individual players the opportunity to accumulate matches through age groups, and offered diverse experiences for these teams, playing against different international opposition around the world.

The analysis informed a range of recommendations including, crucially, buy in from senior management and board to implement changes to the way that England engaged with clubs, selected players, and developed its games programme.

The changes preceded a remarkable turnaround in youth team performance, with England winning the U17 and U20 football World Cups in 2017, as well as U19 European Championships in the same year. Then in 2018 and 2021, England reached their first major tournament semis and final for 28 and 55 years respectively, with the vast majority of the squad having been capped repeatedly at youth level.

9. RECOMMENDATION: | REFOCUS THE LIONS

OUR PROPOSAL

- Align Lions selection to England's current and medium-term needs
- Rebalance the Lions' schedule to an 80/20 focus on red ball vs. 50 over cricket, with no T20 matches
- In the domestic summer, play Lions matches in windows in which there are fewer County Championship matches – June, August, and end of September

OUR RATIONALE

The Lions is an important part of the England pathway and has been proven to support players. However, it has not always optimised its impact due to challenges around scheduling clashes and, at times, not being closely enough aligned to England's selection needs.

Aligning Lions selection to England's needs and making its schedule additive rather than disruptive to the domestic season will enable players to see a clear route through to England. It would involve selecting Lions teams that support potential England players re-find form and/or fitness as well as players that demonstrate What it Takes to Win attributes.

Lions cricket enables England selectors to get a fuller understanding of the potential of players, and it is therefore beneficial to have as many of the highest-potential and most England-relevant players going through the pathway.

We believe that there are sufficient T20 domestic leagues to provide talented white ball players with overseas development opportunities. Therefore, by focusing on red ball cricket, winter Lions programmes will be a compelling development opportunity for red-ball players and support Recommendation 7.



76%
of England players
have played Lions
cricket as part of
their development.

61%
of England
debutants since
2000 have
played U19s

3.8
players per
U19 year group go
on to play
for England.

A THRIVING DOMESTIC GAME THAT IS BEST FOR COUNTIES, PLAYERS, FANS, AND ENGLAND MEN'S TEAMS

A thriving domestic game is essential for cricket in England. While there is much to celebrate about the current domestic game, it is widely acknowledged that, for various reasons, the system is not delivering to its full potential.

Virtually everyone in the game agreed that the key principle behind a successful domestic game was giving players the best competitive platform to blossom domestically and transition successfully to international level, delivered by:

- Giving players an appropriate balance of training, rest and match play to enable them to perform at their best and increase the quality and intensity of competition
- Having the best talent in the country playing more often against each other and reducing the gap in standard to the international game
- Having better pitches, which make for better playing and viewing
- Ensuring that counties are appropriately rewarded for developing talent

Within this area, we have set out four recommendations:

- 10. Produce a coherent domestic schedule**
- 11. Upgrade the standard and intensity of our competitions**
- 12. Incentivise higher quality pitches**
- 13. Provide opportunities for talent and reward counties for development**

RECOMMENDATION: 10

PRODUCE A COHERENT DOMESTIC SCHEDULE

RECOMMENDATION: 11

UPGRADE THE STANDARD AND INTENSITY OF OUR COMPETITIONS

We are proposing a revised domestic schedule and competition structure which we believe will create a more balanced and coherent schedule for players and fans alike, and result in the best standard and intensity for our competitions in all formats.

The below sets out a high-level summary of what the proposed cricket season will look like from 2024 under our proposal. A full description of what this means for each competition, and our rationale, is given in the following pages.

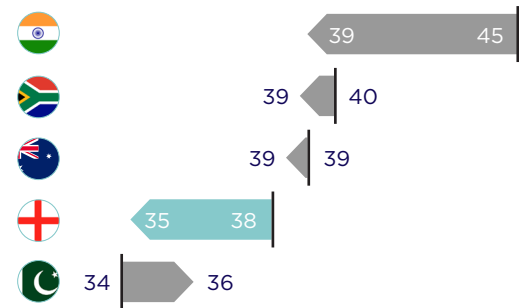
		APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT
COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP	A top division of six to deliver best vs best and two second division conferences of six with one promotion place, played through the summer with a minimum of 10 matches per team						
ONE DAY CUP	A short, sharp competition, played in a single April block when most white ball players are available, significantly strengthening match quality and jeopardy vs today						
T20 BLAST	Played in a single window in dedicated blocks with more fan-friendly prime slot fixtures over 10 group stage matches per team, completed before The Hundred						
THE HUNDRED	A best v best white ball competition in peak summer months to encourage the pressure of full crowd, while acknowledging the strategic role of the competition to attract new fans						
FIRST-CLASS CRICKET FESTIVALS	A new concept proposed to us by the game to provide opportunities for our specialist red-ball players and developing talent, designed as a flexible, engaging way to promote local rivalries e.g. a “London Cup” or “Roses Test Series”						
TEST MATCHES	2023 representative calendar						
LIMITED OVER INTERNATIONALS	2023 representative calendar						

OUR RATIONALE

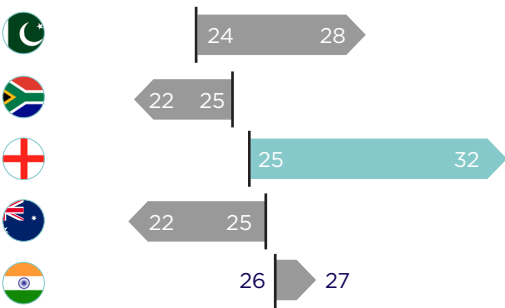
While the county system continues to produce a wealth of highly talented cricketers, we aren't currently able to get the best out of them at international level. While there will always be a gap between domestic and international cricket, this gap generally appears to be larger in England than elsewhere.



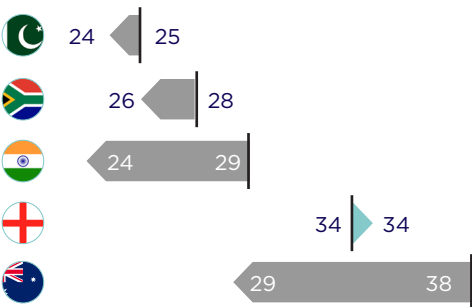
Batters: Difference between first class average and average in first 10 test innings
Batters making their test debut since 2010



Seam Bowlers: Difference between first class average and average in first 10 test innings
Bowlers making their test debut since 2010



Spin Bowlers: Difference between first class average and average in first 10 test innings
Bowlers making their test debut since 2010



A REDUCTION IN THE AMOUNT OF CRICKET PLAYED IS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE QUALITY AND INTENSITY PCA & PLAYER CONSULTATIONS

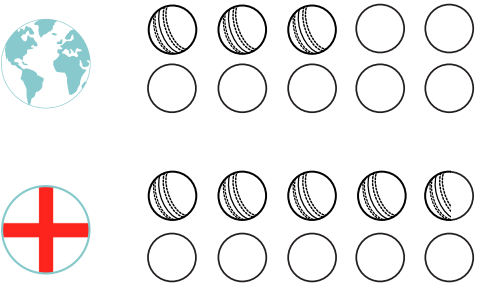
94% DoCs
We play too much cricket.

61% County Supporters
‘the current schedule does not work and there is too much cricket’
Cricket Supporters’ Association & We are England Cricket surveys

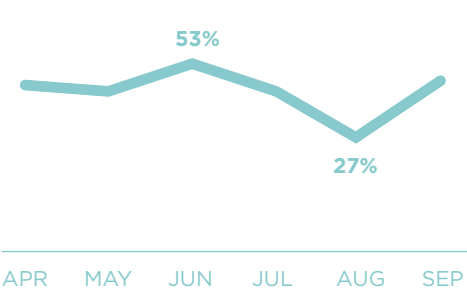


The evidence supports this view; the average First-Class County plays 79 days of cricket during the season, more than any other leading cricket nation. With a shorter season than most, this equates to the average team playing on 45% of days during the season, compared to 31% for players in all the other leading Test-playing nations. What's more, these days are not evenly spread across the summer.

% OF SEASON: PLAYING DAYS VS. REST/
TRAINING/TRAVEL DAYS



% OF DAYS PLAYED IN A MONTH
AVERAGE COUNTY, 2022



Much of the difference in volume of cricket between England and other countries is in the domestic first-class competition. We play more rounds of first-class cricket than anyone else (14); other dominant Test-playing nations like India (12), Australia (11), and South Africa (7) all play less.

66%

of the best 200 English red ball players are not in The Hundred, compared to 48% of the best 50-over players and 39% of the best T20 players



PROPOSALS

One Day Cup

The competition to be played in April in a single block. Comprising of six rounds, with a significant knock-out element. We are investigating the appetite to involve the National Counties to create an FA Cup style competition.

Counties knocked out during the group stage would have the opportunity to play red-ball warm-up fixtures ahead of the County Championship beginning in May

County Championship

The County Championship schedule to begin in May and run through until September. The competition will consist of a 6-team first division and a 12-team second division split into two conferences.

The winners of the two conferences play each other in a play-off game to determine who is promoted.

Each county will play a minimum of 10 Championship matches with the possibility of one play-off match and up to three additional first-class matches (through the festivals of red ball cricket, described below).

OUR RATIONALE

For England to be winning 50 over World cups, it needs to provide its highest-potential players opportunities to play the format. This is not possible in today's schedule. **Moving to April guarantees more of the best players being available to play**, including England players not involved in the IPL, strengthening the quality and intensity of the competition.

All matches would have a higher jeopardy placed upon them because of a shortened format, giving domestic players a chance to experience some of the challenges of the pressure faced regularly by international players in tournaments and major series.

The proposed structure ensures first-class cricket in every month from May to September. There will be the same volume of County Championship cricket played between these months. Red-ball cricket also avoids the fringes of the season.

Counties will have the opportunity to play additional first-class cricket in August, meaning they could play up to 14 first-class games in a season. No change from today.

A six-county Division 1 will concentrate talent and provide consistently higher quality of matches that are a closer quality to Test cricket.

Each county will play a minimum of 10 Championship matches with the possibility of one play-off match and up to three additional first-class matches (through the First-Class Cricket Festivals, described below)



PROPOSALS

T20 Blast

The Blast’s window to begin in late May and run through until July with the quarter-finals and Finals Day played before The Hundred commences. The First-Class Counties to play 10 matches in blocks in the group-stage with a focus on more prime slots (Thursdays to Sundays).

The current Hundred “wildcard” process, where undrafted players from the Blast can enter The Hundred based on their Blast performances, will be extended with more places available per Hundred team.

The Hundred

The Hundred will be played during a four-week window during July/August to balance the high-performance aspects with the commercial and audience growth it provides.

OUR RATIONALE

A two-month window allows a clearer narrative in the race for Finals Day – county cricket’s blue ribband event – which will be played at the height of summer in July. **The single window and increased number of prime slots means larger crowds** and better overall income generation for the counties. It will also help attract quality overseas players to the competition.

The use of blocks will also enable players to focus on the 20-over format and hone their skills. Ten group games ensure no matches are played with under 24 hours turnaround.

The increased number of wildcard slots will provide an increased player narrative and incentive.



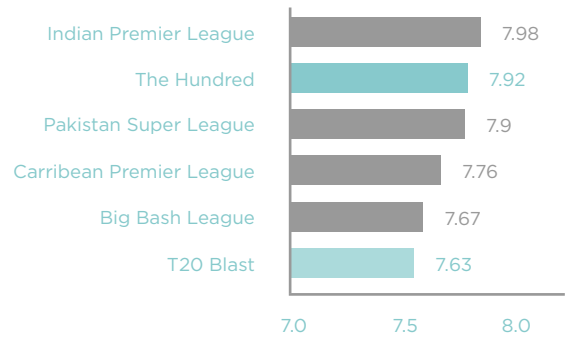
The quality of players in the competition is rated as among the best in the world (see chart), and the competition structure should therefore be retained to maintain this standing.

Given the impact the competition has had in opening the game to new audiences over the past two years, The Hundred’s place in the school holidays and its clear and easy-to-follow structure should be maintained.



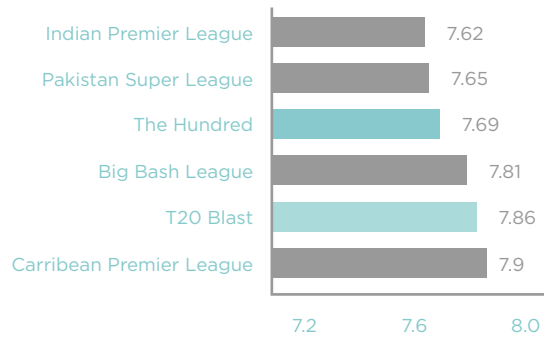
CAREER PERFORMANCE OF PLAYERS IN DOMESTIC COMPETITIONS

Batter pool: average runs per over scored*



*Adjusting for conditions

Bowler pool: average career runs per over conceded*



PROPOSALS

First-Class Cricket Festivals

First-Class matches played between counties in August alongside The Hundred, in a format determined by competing counties, for example:

- An annual London Cup , played in a round robin format
- An annual Roses ‘Test’ series
- A tri-series and final between Western counties

At this time we could also look to schedule Lions and U19 matches.

OUR RATIONALE

A lower percentage of the best red-ball players feature in The Hundred, meaning that there is still a high-quality pool of red-ball talent ready to compete during August.

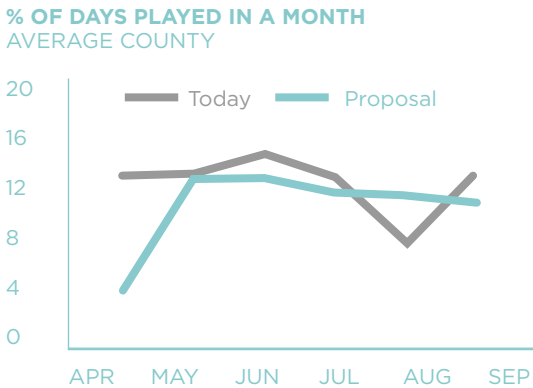
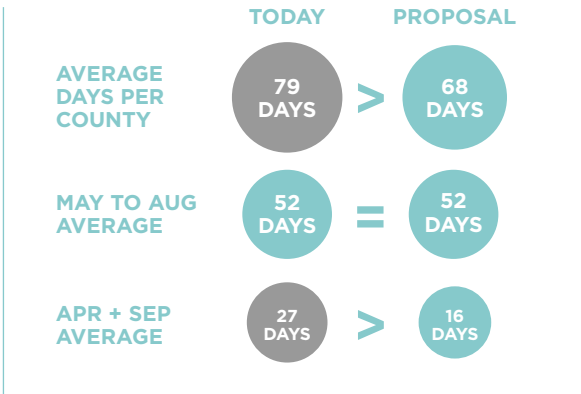
We recognise that playing the County Championship in August undermines the integrity of competition, but first-class cricket played between rival counties will be of a higher standard compared to any form of white-ball cricket while The Hundred is being played.



WHY WE BELIEVE THIS WORKS FOR EVERYONE

In summary, this proposed domestic structure will create a better aligned, more deliberate and more fan-friendly schedule that, most importantly, follows the principle of “quality over quantity for all”.

Specifically, this schedule will give counties first-class cricket in every month from May to September, addresses the peaks and troughs of the current schedule, and reduces the volume of cricket to a level that is more conducive to high performance



A more balanced schedule with less cricket on the fringes of the season

A 15% reduction in the total volume of cricket, reducing player fatigue

Guaranteed 13 first-class games, with up to 14 via play-offs

First-class cricket in every month between May and September

Good For Players

- ✓ More time to train, rest and prepare, enabling better performance
- ✓ Less cricket at the margins of the season
- ✓ Multi-format players get matches in blocks – helping them hone skills and reduce risk of injury
- ✓ More chance to develop skills on international quality wickets that have had more time to be prepared
- ✓ In-form Blast players have a better chance of playing in The Hundred
- ✓ A schedule that is better aligned between domestic and international cricket, enabling Test players to prepare at any point in the season with first-class cricket, and more availability for domestic white-ball competitions

Good for Fans

- ✓ High-quality, high-intensity first-class cricket throughout the heart of the summer, with a mix of white ball cricket too to give fans choice
- ✓ More chance of seeing players perform at their best
- ✓ More chance to see England players in county cricket
- ✓ Higher jeopardy competitions, with fewer dead rubbers
- ✓ Better pitches, enabling more entertaining cricket
- ✓ Better chance of seeing high-quality overseas players due to a single T20 Blast window

Good for FCCs and Staff

- ✓ Peaks and troughs in staff workload are smaller and easier to manage, improving wellbeing
- ✓ Easier to market and sell tickets around a clear schedule
- ✓ Coaches spend more time developing players in-season
- ✓ Core membership product enhanced compared to existing schedule – first-class cricket throughout the summer

WHAT WE CONSIDERED BUT DID NOT RECOMMEND

Considered	Reason not recommended
One Day Cup in August (as today)	The quality of competition is undermined by players selected to play in The Hundred, meaning English cricket does not currently have a high standard and intensity competition for a format in which we aspire to be #1 or in the top 3
County Championship in August	Playing the County Championship when an uneven share of players from different counties are playing in The Hundred was considered to significantly undermine the integrity of the competition.
A County Championship first division of 8 or more teams	Does not provide the same concentration of talent as a six-team top division. Also requires asymmetrical fixture lists if fewer than 14 County Championship matches – see below why this is necessary
12 or more County Championship matches	<p>This causes two major challenges. Firstly, it does not allow for sufficient rest and training for the players, coaches. Getting the balance of volume correct is a key driver for players mental and physical health. The quality of pitches would also be affected.</p> <p>The only way 12+ games could be scheduled with adequate rest would be to play it alongside The Hundred, which is not possible as it would undermine the integrity of the competition given some Counties have more players selected for The Hundred teams than others.</p> <p>Secondly, 12+ fixtures is more difficult to schedule and would not provide symmetrical fixtures (where everyone plays each other home and away).</p>
14 group matches in the T20 Blast	Does not provide sufficient rest and recovery for players and means we have lower proportion of preferable match days for fans and spectators.
Completing the T20 Blast after The Hundred	Breaks up the narrative of the competition and make it less likely to have overseas players for finals.

During the course of this review, there has been commentary about whether The Hundred should have been a more prominent part of our work. We have considered the role of The Hundred. The competition has proved its ability to bring new, young audiences to cricket, and its scheduling in the summer holidays is a vital part of this. In addition, feedback from players rates The Hundred as a premier white ball competition and we believe its structure and prime time schedule should be protected to retain this position.

RECOMMENDATION: 12 | INCENTIVISE HIGHER QUALITY PITCHES

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- To implement a pitch review system that is objective - enabled by ball-tracking technology - and have teeth to reward or penalise counties based on these objective measures
- A County Championship bonus points scoring system, below, implemented in both divisions for one season as a trial to understand its impact on pitches

OUR RATIONALE

The pitches in English domestic cricket do not resemble the international game, or in some respects even Test matches in England. Domestic cricket has a higher share of 'green seamers' in which slower seam bowlers can thrive. We therefore believe it is important to enhance pitch quality.

POINT FOR A LOSS

0

POINT FOR A DRAW

1

POINT FOR A WIN

3

WIN WITHOUT SCORING MORE THAN 324 IN ANY INNINGS

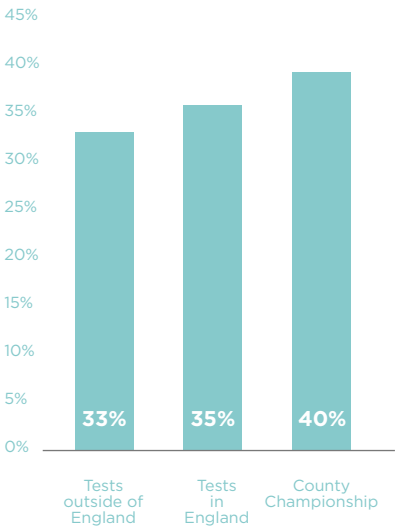
4

WIN WITH ANY SCORE OF 325 - 399 IN ANY INNINGS

5

WITH WITH A SCORE OF 400+ IN ANY INNINGS

% OF WICKETS THAT ARE BOWLED OR LBW



Subjective pitch review systems face inherent challenges to address this problem; an objective system will enable counties to be fairly assessed on the quality of their pitches.

Linking bonus points to winning also means teams will likely play positive cricket. It will encourage teams to both score quickly and take wickets - only possible with better pitches - and will create an alignment with the England Test team, enabling better transition for players between county and International cricket. By requiring a great number of runs to be scored to secure win bonus points, the system would aim to help more matches last into a fourth day, which will bring spinners more into the game, too.

“Without sufficient incentive to develop professional cricketers, we risk not making the most of the talent pool we have in England”

RECOMMENDATION: 13

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TALENT AND REWARD COUNTIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Implement a structured county-to-county player compensation mechanism, where counties are rewarded for the development of players that then sign for other counties. This compensation should be proportionate to the value of the player's contract
- Regulate that Under-21s players can be loaned for free to another county, meaning the parent county covers the entirety of the player's salary

OUR RATIONALE

Without sufficient incentive to develop professional cricketers, we risk not making the most of the talent pool we have in England. A system that rewards counties for this development aims to encourage further talent development through making it financially worthwhile, with counties who are developing players for others receiving direct compensation from these teams.

There is also a recognition that there is a requirement to give young, high-potential players who are not consistently in their county's first team – often those with bigger squads - more opportunities to have a good standard of competitive cricket to play. A loan system that reduces the friction for high potential young players to temporarily move county to get more game time seeks to resolve this.

ENGLAND TEAMS THAT INSPIRE BY THE WAY THEY WIN



Playing for England remains the aspiration of our best young players and Test cricket is still overwhelmingly viewed as the pinnacle of the game amongst the next generation (demonstrated by results from a recent PCA Survey).

The independent expert panel identified two principles to delivering successful England teams:

1. Picking the right players at the right time
2. A strong performance culture in the team

We need to ensure that the opportunity to represent England continues to be a motivating force for players. We must support players to prioritise playing for England and we need to help them manage the pressures that come with international cricket, for their own wellbeing and fitness.

Our recommendations for this area are as follows:

14. Sustain an exciting 'shop window' for the game
15. Enable players to better manage workloads
16. Improve physical and psychological resilience
17. Schedule international matches to allow players to play their best cricket, more often

RECOMMENDATION: 14 | SUSTAIN AN EXCITING 'SHOP WINDOW' FOR THE GAME

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Create a clear style of cricket for England, aligned to What it Takes to Win, that everyone understands, buys into, and knows their role in
- Create inclusive culture so everyone feels welcome – both new and existing players and staff – giving players the psychological safety to express themselves

OUR RATIONALE

England may not always be able to compete financially with T20 leagues, but it can coexist as an option for players by being attractive on culture and style of play, creating an environment that players want to be a part of. England have established and will look to sustain this with their white-ball teams and are on the path to establishing this in Test cricket. This will help deliver an engaging, exciting style of cricket, where the mentality is to focus on playing in the right style and letting the results look after themselves.

RECOMMENDATION: 15 | ENABLE PLAYERS TO BETTER MANAGE WORKLOADS

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Contracts that relieve the pressure on players' physical and mental wellbeing by providing assurances of workload management from England through the right balance of retainers and match fees

OUR RATIONALE

England is increasingly competing with franchise leagues for talent, and therefore needs to have a central contracts system that is fit for purpose in the changing cricket world, where in particular fast bowlers and multi-format players will have major demands placed on them.

This is a complex issue, which will further require consultation with players and TEPP to find a solution that works for all.

RECOMMENDATION: 16 | IMPROVE PHYSICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Investing in a digital athlete monitoring system, which brings together a range of datasets on England players to help gain a more complete understanding of their physical status
- Improving profiling, screening, and surveillance of player workloads
- Having a greater focus on long-term and individualised player programming (training, match and rest)
- Having a greater focus on recruiting and retaining top expertise

OUR RATIONALE

Being an attractive proposition for players – and producing sustained international success – goes well beyond financial reward. We need to look after the welfare of players and minimise injuries by offering them the best standards of care, as well as ensure that our players can peak at the right moments. Not only does this in itself help deliver better England performance from individual players, it will give England a larger pool of fit players at any given time, enabling the team to select according to conditions.





RECOMMENDATION: 17 | SCHEDULE INTERNATIONAL MATCHES TO ALLOW PLAYERS TO PLAY THEIR BEST CRICKET, MORE OFTEN

OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS

- Commercial, operations and England Men's captains and coaches to collaborate on an ongoing basis throughout the construction of the summer schedule. Attempting to allow for appropriate minimum preparation time before series, and gaps in between matches
- Build domestic schedules that enable Test players to play first-class cricket around Test matches, and white-ball specialists to be able to play both international white-ball cricket and major domestic white-ball cricket during the English summer

OUR RATIONALE

The international schedule is an incredibly complex challenge, involving discussion and compromise with a host of other international cricket boards. There are numerous factors at play – meeting international commitments, commercial considerations, providing attractive cricket for fans.

However, we can support our biggest stars and support staff further by looking at how our international matches are scheduled in our season, and how they can dovetail further with the domestic schedule. Both of these actions will give English players the best chance of performing during the English summer, and help deliver winning England teams.

NEXT STEPS

The recommendations laid out in this document are our perspective on the best path forward to deliver a period of sustained high-performance success for England men's cricket and the domestic game in England and Wales.

We want to thank everyone who has been involved in this review. Most importantly to the fans, players and staff from across the FCCs, PCA and the ECB who have taken the time to feedback thoughts and perspectives on our ideas. Thank you in particular to the FCC Chairs, CEOs and Directors of Cricket who have been part of our working and advisory groups.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Most of the recommendations in this report (1-9 and 12-17) are areas that have received broad support from the game to date and are within the remit of the ECB to execute. We understand that the ECB Board and Executive are unanimous in their support of these recommendations and it is now for them to execute. We encourage the ECB to work closely with the FCCs and PCA as they develop a plan to execute against them.

The recommendations that address the structure of the domestic game (Recommendations 10 and 11) are for the FCCs to determine. This is because, under the ECB's constitution, any change to the number of domestic competitions, matches in each competition and promotion / relegation requires the support of two-thirds or more of FCCs.

We recognise that there is a great deal of sensitivity around the appropriate structure for the domestic schedule and that there is no perfect solution given the many valid considerations and viewpoints across the network.

For various reasons, any material changes for the 2023 season would have to be made by the end of September 2022. However, the FCCs have already requested that there is no change to the domestic schedule in 2023 to allow for sufficient time to reflect and debate our recommendations. We understand that the ECB have agreed to continue to consult with the FCCs on the structure for 2024 and beyond with a view to making a final decision by the end of November 2022. This will allow all FCCs complete clarity heading into the 2023 season as to what the structure is that they will be playing for in 2024.

We look forward to the game coming together and being bold in the face of a rapidly changing landscape, and firmly believe that we have the opportunity to achieve remarkable success on the field and usher in an era of dominance for English cricket.



SEPTEMBER
2022

