



Cricket
Discipline
Panel

**IN THE MATTER OF PROCEEDINGS BROUGHT UNDER THE ENGLAND AND WALES
CRICKET BOARD DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE REGULATIONS FOR BREACH OF THE
PITCH REGULATIONS**

Before:

Mark Milliken-Smith KC (Chair)
Dr Seema Patel
Paul Horton

BETWEEN:

CRICKET REGULATOR (“CR”)

and

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY CRICKET CLUB (“LCCC”)

DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL DECISION

INTRODUCTION

The Charge

1. This matter arises out of a Division 1 County Championship fixture between LCCC and Glamorgan County Cricket Club (“**GCCC**”) between the 20th and 23rd August 2026 at Uptonsteel Grace Road, Leicester.
2. On 1st September 2026, the CR issued a Charge Letter to LCCC stating that:

“....during the Division 1 County Championship fixture between LCCC and GCCC between 20 and 23 August 2026, LCCC prepared a Substandard Pitch, which was

rated “Poor” or in the alternative “Below Average”, in breach of Regulation 7.1 of the Pitch Regulations”.

3. Regulation 7.1 of the Pitch Regulations reads as follows:

“A County or Hundred Team must not prepare a Substandard Pitch. A County or Hundred Team that prepares a Substandard Pitch will be in breach of these Pitch Regulations unless they can demonstrate that they sought, acting reasonably, to prepare the best quality Pitch that they could for the Match they were staging.”

4. Following the match, the Match Referee completed a Pitch Report rating the pitch as “Poor” in respect of the unevenness of the bounce. In accordance with Regulation 4.3 of the Pitch Regulations, fulfilment of the lowest criteria will determine the overall rating for the pitch. The pitch was therefore rated as “Poor”.
5. As the pitch was rated “Poor”, the matter was referred to the CR in accordance with Regulation 7.2 of the Pitch Regulations. The CR investigated this matter and sought evidence from those persons it considered necessary, pursuant to Regulation 7.3 of the Pitch Regulations. The CR also instructed an expert, Andy Mackay (“**AM**”), Pitch and Grounds Advisor at the England and Wales Cricket Board (“**ECB**”) to produce a report.
6. After consideration of that evidence the CR averred that LCCC had breached Regulation 7.1 of the Pitch Regulations by preparing a Substandard Pitch for the Match.
7. Consequently, asserted the CR, in accordance with Regulation 7.6 of the Pitch Regulations, the burden was on LCCC to show that (a) the pitch was not a Substandard Pitch and/or (b) that LCCC sought, acting reasonably, to prepare the best quality pitch that it could for the match that was being staged.
8. On 7th September 2026, LCCC formally responded to the Charge. LCCC admitted that the pitch used for the fixture was “Poor” and thus substandard.

However, the Club denied the Charge contending that it had, acting reasonably, prepared the best quality pitch that it could for the match.

The Hearing and the Tribunal's approach to the Charge

9. The Hearing was conducted on 11th September 2026, with all parties attending online.
10. Given LCCC's admission that the pitch was substandard, and in accordance with Regulation 7.6 of the Pitch Regulations, this Disciplinary Tribunal must determine, upon a consideration of all the evidence before it, whether LCCC has satisfied it, on the balance of probabilities, that it *"sought, acting reasonably, to prepare the best quality pitch that it could for the match that was being staged"*.
11. As both parties agreed, the Tribunal's approach must be to apply an objective test in making its assessment as to whether LCCC acted reasonably, taking into account all the evidence before it.

THE RELEVANT EVIDENCE BEFORE THE DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

12. With that primary issue in mind, the Tribunal turns to consider the evidence presented to it by each party. On behalf of LCCC the Director of Cricket Claude Henderson ("CH") gave evidence and was cross-examined by the CR. Emma White ("EW"), LCCC's CEO, also gave evidence. Neither had prepared a statement prior to the hearing but no point was taken by the CR, nor by the Tribunal. AM was called by CR and was cross-examined.

The Evidence of the Match Officials

13. Ian Ramage was the Match Referee. In his report following the match he rated the pitch in relation to unevenness of bounce as *"at most, more than occasional"* on Days 1, 2 and 4, and as *"excessive"* on Day 3. This amounted to a *"Poor"* pitch in accordance with the Regulations.

14. His General Pitch Comments in this Report reflected the information which he provided in his Pro-Forma to the CR dated 26th August 2026 in which he stated the following:
- (i) *“Callum [Lewin, LCCC Head Grounds Manager (“HGM”)] told me that it was not the sort of pitch he would have chosen to prepare...leaving 16mm in the middle was not his preference”;*
 - (ii) *“I was at the match when LCCC played Yorkshire CCC (“YCCC”) earlier in the season...It was a visually similar pitch with 4mm of grass at the ends to allow for turn at the end of the match. My understanding is that LCCC attempted to replicate the same approach for this match, with the ends having a 3mm covering in this match. However, we are two months on, and it has been hot and dry, and the pitch had been played on previously, hence why I had some cause for concern...What is clear is that it did not play the same as the match against YCCC, and it was a significantly worse pitch”;*
 - (iii) *“The pitch looked dry throughout”;*
 - (iv) *“I provided 43 examples in my match log of uneven bounce....from both ends...across all days. Plenty occurred on Days 1 and 2, but I considered Day 3 even worse. This uneven bounce is dependent on the type of bowler, and the hardness of the ball...I would say the degree of bounce was significant”;*
 - (v) *“I have given my decision to mark the pitch as poor in connection with excessive uneven bounce”.*
15. In his Pro-Forma to the CR dated 24th August 2026, Umpire Ben Debenham stated:
- (i) *“I had been one of the umpires in the [match against] YCCC at Leicester...the pitch for the match against YCCC played considerably better than this one*

did...there was not the regularity of up and down uneven bounce that was experienced in this match”;

- (ii) Indentations: *“the ball indented the surface quite a bit more than normal...[which] constituted one of the reasons that the ball deviated up and down”;*
- (iii) Unevenness of bounce: *“It was the same from both ends, where there was regular uneven bounce when the ball pitched on the grass area. That was resulting in the ball going up and down with a significant difference in the height of the delivery...every 3 or 4 overs”;*
- (iv) *“I would agree with the Match Referee’s scoring of the pitch as Poor, given the uneven bounce throughout”;*
- (v) [The HGM] *“did not appear content with the preparation of the pitch. He gave me the impression he had been instructed around pitch preparation and was concerned how the pitch may reflect upon him personally...I would note that ground plate movements appeared to be a factor”.*

16. In his Pro-Forma to the CR, dated 25th August 2026, Umpire Mike Burns stated:

- (i) Unevenness of bounce: *“There was regular uneven bounce from both ends, and over all 4 days of the match...There was a lot of difference in the amount of bounce...The regularity of uneven bounce was concerning...It was the ‘up and down’ movement...that was the major factor;*
- (ii) *“I agree with the Match Referee’s assessment that the pitch be rated poor in connection with regular uneven bounce across all 4 days”.*

The Evidence of the LCCC witnesses

17. Ian Holland was Captain of LCCC. In his Pro-Forma to the CR dated 26th August 2026 he stated:



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- (i) *"I have an input into pitch preparation, but it is a collaborative decision with Claude Henderson and the coaches and senior players. We wanted the ends cut short to 3mm so that it would turn...we backed our spinners in this match...We left 16mm in the middle as previously to keep the pace in the wicket...It worked against YCCC, with pace and carry in the wicket";*
 - (ii) Unevenness of bounce: *"There is no denying that there was some uneven bounce from Day 1. I found that very surprising";*
 - (iii) *"I have been asked why I think there was uneven bounce. The pitch was a lot dryer than we had expected. There was also a semi-final day in the lead up to preparing the wicket, so again that made it dryer than expected...we had no intention of wanting uneven bounce".*
18. Alfonso Thomas was the Coach of LCCC. In Pro-Forma to the CR dated 26th August 2026 he stated:
- (i) *"Callum...goes above and beyond to get the best pitch we ask for...We discussed wanting the pitch for this match...similar to the pitch that was prepared for the...match against YCCC...We were not looking for it to up and down and uneven bounce was never something we wanted";*
 - (ii) *"Factors that caused uneven bounce could include the recent weather...I have never seen a wicket go up and down as it did, and this was unexpected...The weather was very hot leading into the game";*
 - (iii) *"There was uneven bounce on Day 1 and Day 2, but not as pronounced on Day 3 and Day 4...At no point did we anticipate it would go up and down".*
19. LCCC's HGM, Callum Lewin, was interviewed by the CR on 27th August 2026. He stated as follows:
- (i) He had worked at LCCC since 2010 and for many years under the previous HGM – he took over in February 2025;



- (ii) *"I will start to prepare the pitch...ten to fourteen days out depending on...the weather conditions. And then it's not usually until three or four days before I get told to have the pitch in a certain way...it's usually the day before when I get given the final instruction on what they would like in terms of the length of grass";*
- (iii) *"Ordinarily I would offer my advice to the Director of Cricket and...our Head Coach and say 'This is what I think'. Ultimately they usually make the decision";*
- (iv) *"On this occasion I said to them 'If that's what you want with the ends being shaved off, something to spinners and leaving the grass longer, I can do that. Just need to be aware of the weather conditions on day one' because the weather forecast wasn't great...[short at the ends] to encourage spin...Longer grass in the middle to aid in the bounce and carry it for the seam attack";*
- (v) [against YCCC] *"we did the exact same process" - my instructions were "essentially" to replicate what I did against YCCC;*
- (vi) *It behaved differently this time round because "It's a used pitch this time around. We had two T20s on it ten weeks ago...There was a lot of circumstances leading up to the game that were just out of my control, such as the weather was 35 degrees and we had an unscheduled Bollywood filming event four days before, and I wasn't allowed to work on the pitch. I wasn't allowed to cover it or anything..." it would lose a lot of moisture content to evaporation if it wasn't covered;*
- (vii) *"I put on as much water as I could, as I usually would. Absolutely drowned the pitch as I normally do...evenly all the way along...It wasn't until the day before the game when we did the moisture readings the first time that the moisture was a lot lower than a lot of people expected it to be...it's last artificial watering was on the...10th";*
- (viii) Having been off on Monday 17th, I asked Simon, one of the grounds team, to roll three lots of 20 minutes – he told me Claude had asked him



to stop heavy rolling the pitch...we did approximately fourteen hours with the heavy roller;

- (ix) *"We had a semi-final on the 16th...[the pitch] "was under a protective mat all day";*
- (x) *"Three millimetres at the ends and sixteen in the middle of the pitch...It was four and sixteen for YCCC";*
- (xi) The Clegg readings on match day morning were 338, 332, 381, 374 and 361. *"That's very high for here...If they do get above 300, close to 400 as the 381 is, that's surprising to me."* [This was because] *"the moisture content was a lot lower than I would have liked it to have been";*
- (xii) The moisture readings were 24.1%, 28.4% and 24.9%. *"Our average moisture content is usually around 30%, 34%...at the highest end of the scale"* which was very low. *"There was no intent behind the dryness at all".* I didn't take a core before the match;
- (xiii) The showers the day before the match didn't get on the pitch because we covered it at lunchtime, and on day one *"it didn't get wet at all, to a significant amount";*
- (xiv) *"On the 9th August I pulled a manual rake through it to thin a bit of the grass out...I ran a mechanical scarifier through it as well"* and then *"mowed it with the mower set to sixteen millimetres. And that's when I started soaking it after that".* *"Fairly normal"* for how I prepare a pitch;
- (xv) If left entirely to my own devices before the game this is not the pitch I would have prepared – *"I would have had a uniform covering of grass along the entire pitch, so I wouldn't have shaved the ends and I would have gone anywhere between ten to fourteen millimetres of grass...because of the weather conditions on day one being as they were...my concern with leaving a lot of grass on, especially with how dense the grass... is seam movement"...not uneven bounce;*



(xvi) A conversation with Claude or Alfonso about doing this would be “a very difficult one because it’s usually they make the ultimate decision on what they want the grass length to be, even though I can advise them that ‘This is what the moisture content is. This is what the grass level is. I recommend we take it down.’ It’s a tough conversation to have with them”;

(xvii) If I were to do it again “I would probably have raked it out a little bit more and tried to manage the moisture content a little bit better. But with the Bollywood and the semi-final and the hot weather, evidently, it was difficult to keep the moisture content at the level I would have liked. Which usually I try to aim for 30%, up to 34%”;

(xviii) “There was a lot of cracks”...I do think that was one of the reasons for the uneven bounce. “Normally where pitches crack here, the plates that form, they’re usually quite large. For this game they were really small. So there was a lot more cracks than what there would normally be”;

(xix) “We put a lot of pride and effort into what we do”.

Oral Evidence and Submissions from LCCC

Oral Evidence at Hearing

20. LCCC, through EW, made their initial position clear. LCCC did not dispute the rating, but contended that, in the preparation of the wicket, it had sought, acting reasonably, to prepare the best quality pitch that it could for the match that was being staged. LCCC’s past record was exemplary in this regard, and the whole staff were shocked by these events.

21. In his evidence, CW set out LCCC’s position as to pitch preparation:

(i) The Director of Cricket, Coaches and Captain would meet and discuss the best balance of a side to play the upcoming opposition, and thereafter, in conjunction with the HGM, seek to prepare a pitch in the

best interests of the Club – this would always be within the Regulations, and is the practice across all First Class Counties;

- (ii) This group asked the HGM to replicate the pitch for the YCCC match;
- (iii) It was not reasonable to foresee that there may have been moisture in the 16mm surface for the GCCC match: the conditions for the YCCC game were likely to have produced more moisture in this regard and there was no uneven bounce in that match; thereafter the weather had been extremely hot, with heatwave after heatwave for some two months;
- (iv) There is always clear communication between us and the HGM as to what we would like, but ultimately the preparation of the pitch is 100% for the HGM;
- (v) We were trying to find a balance which provides seamers with more carry and bounce, with the potential for more spin towards the end of the game;
- (vi) The HGM's anxiety was more to do with seam movement not uneven bounce, an anxiety which was allayed given how the YCCC pitch played;
- (vii) The HGM's job is to share his concerns, and we give him the confidence to do so;
- (viii) The pitch was very dry due to the conditions, and the moisture level had dropped to 24%;
- (ix) We thought it reasonable to emulate the same pitch as the match against YCCC which had played well and was rated well – the only difference between the GCCC pitch and the YCCC pitch was the heatwave we faced;

- (x) It was reasonable for us to overrule the HGM's desire to keep the cut at 10-14mm because it had played well with the same cut against YCCC;
- (xi) The reason for the uneven bounce in the GCCC match was because the pitch had dried out and cracked – the ball went up and down because of the cracks which were caused by the heatwave we faced;
- (xii) We agree that 8 hours of exposure to the sun on the day of the Bollywood event would have had an impact but, as AM says, that was only one day;
- (xiii) On the first day of preparation (day 10) we soaked the pitch more than normal – in hindsight I am not sure what else we could have done, we have never had an issue with cracks causing the ball to go up and down – we wanted to copy the YCCC pitch, we did not want the ball to go up and down.

Written Submissions where not covered by evidence elsewhere

22. In their written submissions, LCCC made many of these points and also that:
- (i) Because the pitch had been good in the YCCC match, the approach to replicate it using exactly the same process could not be reasonably criticised;
 - (ii) The exposure to sun caused by the Bollywood filming was ameliorated by leaving the ground sheet on for longer thereafter;
 - (iii) LCCC did not know that the extraordinary weather and resulting ground conditions would cause the same preparation methodology to produce a materially different outcome.

The Evidence of the GCCC witnesses

23. Kiran Carlson was Captain of GCCC. In his Pro-Forma dated 27th August 2026 he stated:
- (i) *“I would describe the ends of the pitch as excessively dry. It was harder to tell in the middle although you could see plates moving, and cracks in the ground”;*
 - (ii) *“The uneven bounce occurred throughout the match...With the weather there were too many cracks...there were plates, and the ball was bouncing as a lottery for both teams”.*
24. Richard Dawson was Coach of GCCC. In his Pro-Forma dated 26th August 2026 he stated:
- (i) *“The pitch was clearly cracked underneath the grass covering, throughout the middle...It was absolutely dry at both ends”;*
 - (ii) *“On all four days...balls were coming up more than expected or staying much lower than expected...It was a pitch which was dangerously up and down from the start”.*

The Evidence pertaining to Pitch Preparation

Andy Mackay – ECB Pitch and Grounds Advisor

Summary of written Report – Examination of pitch

25. In this current post for over 6 years, he was a groundsperson for some 25 years, most recently as Head Grounds Manager at Sussex CCC. He conducted a technical investigation of the pitch some 45 minutes after the end of play on 23rd August 2026.
26. His physical observations of the pitch included:
- (i) The length of grass on a seamer’s length was probably nearer 18mm - in oral evidence he conceded that there was room for error in this finding,

but nevertheless 16mm in height is very long from a conventional perspective;

- (ii) The surface of the pitch was very hard;
- (iii) There were several dense clumps of grass within the central grass sward which had not been sufficiently disturbed during preparation;
- (iv) The whole pitch was visibly crazed with cracks underneath the grass cover. There was significant movement in these cracks when prodded with a foot. There were some sudden changes of levels at the junctions of some of the cracks where a corner piece had collapsed. Cracks with such movement usually render uneven pace and bounce. Balls striking these changes of surface levels can deviate very sharply in any direction, often causing a ball to leap up from the surface. These cracks had been highly visible at the start of play as the Match Referee's photograph showed;
- (v) The depth of cracks were 150-200mm deep: therefore the movement in the cracks was caused by a soil which had become overly dry at depth, forming independent towers of soil which had become separated from the underlying base of the pitch;
- (vi) Soil profile cores demonstrated that the soil had dried and shrunk to a point where fractures and cracks were impacting the surface integrity;
- (vii) The surface of the pitch had indented under the passage of the ball, which usually occurs due to a surface which is too soft due to moisture – at the time of inspection the surface was dry so this must have occurred early in the match, the longer grass promoting moisture accumulation from rain and reducing subsequent evaporation both before and on day one; the unusual length of the grass increases the risk of this; most indentations were not severe though were significant; a ball striking an

indentation may artificially bounce more or less and/or may deviate sideways.

- (viii) Clegg hammer hardness testing revealed a moisture average of 24.8%, which is low for this ground, where Championship matches usually begin at a level of 29-34%.

Summary of written Report - Findings

27. Several factors led to uneven bounce:
- (i) Unstable and moving cracks resulting from excessive drying of the soil profile to 150mm deep;
 - (ii) Acute level changes caused by:
 - (a) Localised collapses at the junctions of cracks;
 - (b) Ball indentations formed early in the match;
 - (c) Numerous large clumps of grass.
28. The unevenness of bounce is likely to have resulted most commonly from the moving cracks, then in terms of frequency from the indentations and clumps of grass, and finally from the collapsed junctions between the cracks.
29. The pitch had been allowed to become overly dry to a depth, which had caused cracks which were unstable, and caused some of the junctions where cracks met to be weak and to break away. Cracks that move and/or collapse are not normal. The risk of this was foreseeable, and should have been appreciated and adequately managed, especially during hot weather.
30. The pitch started with too much moisture at the surface of the soil because of the long and dense grass cover coupled with the wetter and cooler weather at the start of the match – this risk factor should have been appreciated by the

HGM and LCCC, and it would have been reasonable to reduce the height of the cut and/or the density. The indentations were the result.

31. The grass cover was not sufficiently groomed during preparation such as to remove the clumps.
32. There were significant differences between the circumstances surrounding the pitch preparation for the matches between LCCC and YCCC and that between LCCC and GCCC, the relevant ones in respect of the uneven bounce on a seamer's length being:
 - (i) The YCCC pitch had been prepared at a different time of year and in completely different weather conditions;
 - (ii) The GCCC pitch was significantly drier: the HGM's figures showed 32.5% average moisture for the YCCC match as compared with 25.8% for the GCCC match;
 - (iii) The GCCC pitch was significantly harder, an average of 357.2 as against 233.2 in respect of the YCCC pitch.
33. The cracking, surface indentations and grass clumps were foreseeable outcomes of a pitch which had become excessively dry at depth whilst retaining substantial grass cover at the surface.
34. None of these results would have been deliberate aims for LCCC, since it is highly unlikely that a Club would ever want so much uneven bounce. However, each of these factors presented foreseeable risks that should have informed part of the planning and preparation process.
35. Whilst the weather leading into the match was a period of challenging temperatures, there are measures available to Clubs to reduce their impact: for example, the judicious use of covers to provide shade or shielding from the sun, and/or the application of additional water during preparation. Risk

management should have envisaged the need to incorporate protection of the pitch during the Bollywood event. It is unlikely, given the use of the protective mat, that the semi-final had any significant impact.

36. The defects identified were foreseeable consequences of the preparation employed and should have reasonably been expected by and mitigated by the LCCC professional grounds team.

AM's oral evidence at the Hearing (where not covered above)

37. He was clear that he was not suggesting that LCCC did anything nefarious.
38. His initial impression at his examination of the pitch was that the cracks were caused by dryness underneath; by the time he completed that examination his impression broadened as per his report.
39. There was no question that 16mm grass coverage was unusual even for LCCC despite the YCCC match.
40. An HGM should be aware of moisture levels in the pitch.
41. Cracks would have appeared part way through the preparation, although their extent may have been masked by the longer grass. Once cracks appear, and they were foreseeable due to the weather, the grounds team should have been aware and should have mitigated the problem.
42. With such a dense covering of grass I wouldn't necessarily expect the HGM to spot the clumps of grass.
43. LCCC legitimately pursued the process of having more grass upon the pitch – that is a legitimate but unusual approach - taking such an approach comes with these additional risks.

THE TRIBUNAL'S ANALYSIS OF THE EVIDENCE

Preliminary observations of the Tribunal

44. It is no part of the CR's case that LCCC's preparation of a pitch which resulted in uneven bounce was deliberate – the Tribunal of course accepts this: no team would sensibly want this as an outcome of its pitch preparation. Moreover, the CR and Tribunal accept that the preparation of a pitch which suits the balance of a home team's side is both legitimate and common practice, as long as such preparation sits within the Regulations.
45. In both written and oral evidence LCCC were understandably concerned to ensure that any press coverage and wider commentaries surrounding the quality of the pitch should not in any way influence the Tribunal as regards the decision it makes. Given that there was no dispute as to the pitch rating, and that the test is an objective one, the Tribunal reiterates, as it made clear to the parties in the hearing, that its focus remains on the evidence, and it wholly ignores any such outside noise.

The Test

46. The Tribunal reminded itself of the test under Pitch Regulation 7.6 set out at paragraph 7 above. The Tribunal noted that LCCC's case in part included reliance upon paragraph 7.6.2, namely that the heatwave in the two months prior to the GCCC match was unique in its intensity and was thus beyond LCCC's control.
47. The Panel noted that the list of factors in paragraph 7.6 was not exhaustive. The central question in this case is whether, in his preparation of the pitch for this match, LCCC's Head Grounds Manager, and LCCC more widely, acted reasonably. The test which the Tribunal must apply is an objective one.

The Tribunal's Approach to the Evidence

48. The starting point was the agreed evidence that this was a substandard pitch, and that the rating attributed to it by the Match Referee was "Poor".
49. The CR's case, based on the evidence in particular of AM, was that the pitch was substandard by way of its uneven bounce due to the following factors:
- (i) Unstable and moving cracks resulting from excessive drying of the soil profile to 150mm deep; and
 - (ii) Acute level changes caused by:
 - (a) Localised collapses at the junctions of cracks;
 - (b) Ball indentations formed early in the match;
 - (c) Numerous large clumps of grass.
50. LCCC's evidence is clear: it accepted that the pitch was substandard by way of uneven bounce because of the cracking of the pitch which was caused, it contended, by the unprecedented heatwave. However, LCCC suggested that neither the indentations nor the clumps were causative factors in the presentation of uneven bounce.
51. AM's evidence was that the unevenness of bounce is likely to have resulted most commonly from the moving cracks, and also that some was caused from the collapsed junctions between the cracks. Both AM and LCCC agreed that these manifestations of cracking and consequent uneven bounce were sufficient alone, without the other factors, to render the pitch rating as "Poor". LCCC did not, indeed perhaps could not, dispute the physical findings of the Match Referee and AM (and others) in this regard (see, for example, paragraph 26 above).

52. The key dispute between the parties was as to the existence of any risks which were presented by the preparation of a pitch deploying exactly the same methodology as that used for the previous YCCC match. On the one hand LCCC say that these heatwaves were so extraordinary in nature that they could not reasonably have been expected to have done anything differently to that which they had done for the YCCC match. On the other AM is clear that not only should the exceptionally hot weather have alerted a reasonable HGM and Club to the foreseeable risk of cracking due to the hot weather but also that, as a consequence, LCCC should have acted to mitigate that risk in their pitch preparation.
53. This Tribunal is satisfied, on the evidence before it, that, notwithstanding CH's evidence, the preparation for the GCCC pitch was "*normal*" as explained by the HGM in his interview with the CR, that is, LCCC sought to replicate exactly what it had done in terms of preparation for the YCCC pitch but no more, save for the reduction of the grass length at each end of the wicket to 3mm.
54. LCCC accepts that the approach it took in terms of preparation for the YCCC match was unusual (i.e. significantly longer grass in the centre and shaved ends) and not normal pitch preparation. In the judgment of the Tribunal this unusual approach against the background of very markedly different weather conditions in the lead up to the GCCC match inevitably created a set of circumstances, including the dryness of the pitch to a depth (which led to the consequent cracking), which was not only foreseeable but against which risk LCCC should have taken positive steps to guard. It was insufficient, in the face of such extreme conditions, to simply prepare a pitch in exactly the same way as they had done two months before.
55. The Tribunal accepts in particular, in this regard, the following evidence from AM:
- (i) The pitch had been allowed to become overly dry to a depth, which had caused cracks which were unstable, and caused some of the junctions

where cracks met to be weak and break away. Cracks that move and/or collapse are not normal. The risk of this was foreseeable, and should have been appreciated and adequately managed, especially during hot weather;

- (ii) There were significant differences between the circumstances surrounding the pitch preparation for the matches against YCCC and GCCC, namely:
 - (a) The YCCC pitch had been prepared at a different time of year and in completely different weather conditions;
 - (b) The GCCC pitch was significantly drier: the HGM's figures showed 32.5% average moisture for the YCC match as compared with 25.8% for the GCCC match;
 - (c) The GCCC pitch was significantly harder, an average of 357.2 as against 233.2 for YCCC.
- 56. The cracking was a foreseeable risk in respect of a pitch which had become excessively dry at depth whilst retaining substantial grass cover at the surface. Each of these factors presented foreseeable risks that should have informed part of the planning and preparation process.
- 57. Whilst the weather leading into the match was a period of challenging temperatures, there are measures available to Clubs to reduce their impact: for example, the judicious use of covers to provide shade or shielding from the sun and/or the application of additional water during preparation. Risk management should have envisaged the need to incorporate protection of the pitch during the Bollywood event.
- 58. Cracks would have appeared part way through the preparation: indeed, the HGM said in his interview that there were a lot more cracks than there would

normally be. One of the difficulties with going ahead with this unusual pitch preparation was that their extent may have been masked by the longer grass.

59. The defects identified were foreseeable consequences of the preparation employed and should have reasonably been expected and mitigated by the LCCC professional grounds team.
60. Whether the HGM found it difficult to stand his ground in the face of the LCCC Cricketing and Coaching Team is perhaps not a matter the Tribunal needs to determine, though the Tribunal notes the HGM's observation in his interview with the CR that he would have taken a different approach to pitch preparation had he been left to his own devices.
61. It is likely that, given the similarity in preparation between the pitches for the YCCC and GCCC matches, and the cooler weather for the former, the dense grass covering may well have created moisture on the surface of the YCCC pitch as well. Given that the pitch played well in the YCCC match, the Tribunal does not consider it unreasonable that this aspect wasn't foreseen as a risk by LCCC.
62. However, the growth of clumps between the cracks, which a mower may not have been able to reach due to their locations, was a direct result of the existence of the cracks themselves, and, for the same reasons as the cracking, should have been foreseen and managed effectively.
63. In the Tribunal's judgment the approach taken by LCCC to replicate an innately unusual form of pitch preparation in very different circumstances created risks which were foreseeable and which were not addressed by the Club. As the outcome demonstrated, this resulted in the preparation of a substandard pitch.
64. The Tribunal finds that whilst LCCC did not intend the consequences which materialised in terms of uneven bounce, in all the circumstances its

methodology cannot objectively be considered to be reasonable. Accordingly, and for these reasons, LCCC have failed to discharge the burden upon them under Regulation 7.6 that it *“sought, acting reasonably, to prepare the best quality pitch that it could for the match that was being staged”*.

THE TRIBUNAL’S CONSIDERATION OF SANCTION

65. Given this Decision, we turn to consider the sanction which must be imposed. Regulation 7.7 of the Pitch Regulations provides that, without prejudice to this Tribunal’s general powers of sanction, an automatic points deduction will apply. In the County Championship, a pitch rating of “Poor” carries an automatic points deduction of 16 points. The Tribunal may increase or reduce any points deduction to take account of any applicable mitigating and aggravating factors with reference to Regulation 7.10 of the Pitch Regulations.
66. In accordance with Disciplinary Procedure Regulations 9.1 and 9.2.3, the Tribunal’s general powers of applicable sanctions, for this case, are as follows:
- (i) a reprimand;
 - (ii) a fine without limit;
 - (iii) suspension from all or any specified cricketing activity from a date that the Disciplinary Tribunal shall order;
 - (iv) suspension of eligibility to participate in cricket in any Match(es) or for any fixed period; and
 - (v) alteration of the points awarded to any Cricket Organisation in respect of any Match(es) (including in relation to future editions of a competition, where applicable).
67. The mandatory starting point under paragraph 7.7 of the Pitch Regulations is a points deduction of 16 points. This reflects the seriousness of the fact that this was a pitch rated as “Poor” and accepted by LCCC to be such.

68. Under Regulation 7.10, the Tribunal considers the following to be mitigating factors which reduce the sanction:
- (i) LCCC's early admission that the pitch was substandard;
 - (ii) This was the first rating of Below Average, Poor or Unfit received by LCCC in the last 24 months.
69. The Tribunal also takes into account LCCC's full cooperation with the CR's investigation, the fact that there was no intention to deliberately create a pitch with uneven bounce, and the extreme weather conditions which do amount to some mitigation. This was not a case of cheating.
70. The CR submitted that there were no aggravating factors in its view, and the Tribunal finds none.
71. The preparation of the best quality pitch which provides an even contest between bat and ball and allows all disciplines of the game to flourish is of fundamental importance. Accordingly, the unreasonable failure to do must warrant a meaningful penalty. In imposing these sanctions, the Tribunal is mindful of the potential financial impact of the points deduction from this season's competition.
72. The Tribunal has at all times had in mind that any sanction must be consistent, proportionate and fair. To this end the Tribunal has considered recent Decisions of the Cricket Discipline Panel regarding breaches of the Pitch Regulations.

SANCTIONS

73. In relation to LCCC therefore, the Panel imposes the following sanction:
- (i) an 8-point deduction for the 2026 County Championship season effective immediately;

- (ii) an 8 point deduction for the 2027 County Championship suspended until the close of play on the last day of that season – if LCCC commits any further breach of the Pitch Regulations in relation to County Championship matches in the 2027 season, then it is highly likely that, at the discretion of the CDP, the suspended element of this sanction will be brought into operation, and may be in addition to any separate sanction imposed for that further breach;
- (iii) a Fine of £5,000 to be paid within 28 days of the date of release of this Decision.

COSTS

74. Each party will bear its own costs of and occasioned by the hearing.

RIGHT OF APPEAL

75. Should any Party wish to Appeal they will have ten (10) working days to do so from the date on which these decisions are handed down, namely by close of business on Tuesday 29th September 2026.
76. The Parties are reminded that the Appeals Procedure is set out in Regulation 11 of the Disciplinary Procedure Regulations. Any application for an Appeal should be made to the Chair of the CDP.

Mark Milliken-Smith KC
For and on behalf of the Disciplinary Tribunal
London, UK
15 September 2026