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## 2021 Men's County Championship Group Stage fixtures announced

- 2021 Men's County Championship season to begin Thursday 8 April
- Each First-Class County with play 14 matches across Group and Divisional Stages
- Divisional Stage to begin on Bank Holiday Monday 30 August
- Five-day Bob Willis Trophy final to start on Monday 27 September
- Remainder of women's and men's domestic fixtures to be announced in early 2021

The Men's County Championship will return next summer with all 18 First-Class Counties set to be in action when the opening round begins on Thursday 8 April.

Fixtures and dates for the remodelled 2021 Men's County Championship have been announced today with Essex beginning their title defence at home to Worcestershire at the Cloudfm County Ground.

Somerset are set to make an immediate return to Lord's, where they met Essex in this summer's Bob Willis Trophy final, with an opening-round clash against Middlesex.

Fixtures for the remaining domestic women's and men's white-ball competitions are set to be announced in early 2021.

The First-Class Counties agreed in October to reshape the Men's County Championship structure for next summer only to help mitigate against the possible impact of COVID-19.

Each First-Class County has initially been placed into one of three seeded groups of six and has been scheduled to play five home matches and five away matches during the Group Stage.

The opening nine rounds of Group Stage matches are to be played on consecutive weeks and all are due to begin on a Thursday with a scheduled Sunday finish.

The Group Stage will conclude in July with the Round 10 and 11 matches to begin on a Sunday. All the First-Class Counties will play in the final round of Group Stage fixtures.

The top two counties in each group, at the end of the Group Stage, will progress to Division One, with the other counties moving into Divisions Two and Three, where they will each play a further four matches.

The winner of Division One will be crowned the 2021 County Championship winners.

The opening round of Divisional Stage matches will begin on the Bank Holiday Monday 30 August.

The five-day Bob Willis Trophy final will be played between the top two counties in Division One and is scheduled to start on Tuesday 27 September.

ECB Managing Director County Cricket, Neil Snowball, said: "We're all looking forward to the return of the County Championship in 2021 after a very challenging year in 2020.

"Despite the significant hurdles that we faced this year, the domestic game still found a way to play meaningful cricket across men's and women's formats while ensuring that our members and supporters were able to remain close to the game through advanced live streaming of matches.

"Once again we have seen an innovative and collaborative approach between the ECB and the 18 First Class Counties that has enabled us to plan for 2021 with a new, County Championship structure for 2021 only, that is designed to be both exciting for players and supporters and also flexible to the possible ongoing impact of COVID-19.

"We are also working hard with all 18 First-Class Counties to ensure that we are able to welcome the return of crowds safely next year and will continue to work closely with Government and all relevant authorities."

For the full fixture list visit [ecb.co.uk](http://ecb.co.uk) or receive the County Championship schedules direct to you with the ECB's [digital calendar](#) via this link.

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### Editor's Notes

The County Championship Group Stage fixtures are available via the download link below. The Divisional Stage dates for all four rounds of that phase and Bob Willis Trophy final dates are also included.

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