



Ollie Pope and Mark Wood of England warm up displaying key workers names on their backs ahead of day one of the 1st #RaiseTheBat Test match at The Ageas Bowl on July 08, 2020 in Southampton, England. (Photo by Stu Forster/Getty Images for ECB)

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## Ben Stokes leads tribute with key worker names featuring on his team's shirts as first #raisethebat Test gets under way

- England players pay tribute to key workers ahead of first #raisethebat Test against West Indies
- Teachers, doctors, nurses and carers among those whose names appear on players' training shirts
- Ben Stokes says it's "real honour" for players to wear their names

Key worker heroes from across the cricket family were today honoured by having their names displayed on the training shirts of the England Men's Test team ahead of the start of the first #raisethebat Test against the West Indies.

The three-Test series, taking place behind closed doors, is honouring and celebrating the heroes who have been going above and beyond to help others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, the England Men's players and coaches took to the pitch at The Ageas Bowl, Southampton, wearing the names of key workers on their training shirts before the start of the match. The people named on the shirts were all nominated by their local cricket clubs and include teachers, doctors, nurses, carers and other vital professions.

Each key worker will now receive the shirt bearing their name, signed by the player who wore it, to thank them for the work they've been doing. Their names and photos will also be highlighted in broadcast partners' Sky and BBC's coverage and displayed across the ground on the big screens and LED banners.

Ben Stokes, who is captaining England in the first Test while Joe Root is away for the birth of his second child, took to the pitch wearing the name of Durham-local Dr Vikas Kumar, a specialist in anaesthetics and critical care at Darlington Memorial Hospital.

Through the pandemic Dr Kumar, a keen cricketer who plays at Cowgate Cricket Club in Newcastle and the Gilli Boys Amateur Club in Darlington, has been working on the frontline while also being there for his family at home.

**Ben Stokes said:** "We're only able to play this Test match because of the amazing job that key workers up and down the country have done to help us through this pandemic. Wearing their names is a real honour for us, and is a small sign of our appreciation for the incredible work they have done. They have truly gone in to bat for us all, and it makes me proud of how the whole cricket family has responded to help us get through these unprecedented times."

**Dr Vikas Kumar, whose name featured on Ben Stokes's shirt, said:** "The past four months have been very difficult, but it was a wonderful surprise to find

out that Ben Stokes of all people is wearing my name on his training shirt. So many of my colleagues at work and at the cricket club have been working so hard and made big sacrifices, so this is for them as well.”

The other key workers being celebrated today include:

- Dr Samara Afzal, a GP in Birmingham, who shared the moment with Chris Woakes, also a West-Midlands local. Dr Afzal is a chief medical adviser to the National Asian Cricket Council and last year supported a successful pilot which used cricket as a way to get her female patients from the South Asian community more active.
- Sussex-based paramedic Joe Wheatley is one of those honoured, with Sussex player Jofra Archer wearing the Barcombe Cricket Club member's name on his training shirt. Joe offers fantastic support to those he treats and their families, often being a patient's first contact with medical staff during an emergency. When he's not driving an ambulance, he's manning the heavy roller as Barcombe's groundsman and has kept the pitches maintained throughout the postponement of recreational cricket.
- Chris Tall is a pillar of his local cricket club, Newark Ransome & Marles Cricket Club, where he volunteers as groundsman, coach and on the committee. He had to step away from his club as the pandemic developed, however, to focus his attentions on caring for the residents in the care home at which he works. His efforts and sacrifices at such a crucial time led to his teammates nominating him. This morning he featured on the shirt of Stuart Broad who plays for Chris's home county of Nottinghamshire.
- Pace bowler Mark Wood will recognise local hero Susan Bainbridge on his training shirt. Susan is a volunteer at the North East Ambulance Service but in her spare time runs Zumba classes for older people throughout Teesdale. During the pandemic, the Middleton-in-Teesdale cricketer has taken her exercise classes online through Zoom to ensure the community can keep active.

**Tom Harrison, ECB Chief Executive Officer, said:** “Along with fans up and down the country, we are very excited that our England Men's players are back on the cricket field today. However, we will never forget those we've lost and the sacrifices made by so many people during this pandemic. Key workers and volunteers across the country have often put their own lives on

the line to keep us safe, and it's right that today we say a small thank you to some of those from the cricket family who have done us so proud."

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to Editor:**

Ben Foakes – Emily Blakemore, Nurse

Ollie Robinson – Dr Nasir Ali, Emergency Medicine Consultant at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Jofra Archer – Joe Wheatley, Paramedic

Jack Leach – Ollie Clarke, NHS volunteer

Olly Stone – Holly Buxton, Organiser of the COVID-19 Community Workforce for the elderly

Dominic Bess – Wendy Morris, Nurse

Mark Wood – Susan Bainbridge, NEAS Ambulance Volunteer

Stuart Broad – Chris Tall , Care Home Worker

James Anderson – Tom Field, Nurse Practitioner

Dan Lawrence – Richard Freeman, Police Officer

Joe Denly – Anna Tunnicliff, A&E Sister

Zak Crawley – Debi Armstrong, Specialist Nurse

Craig Overton – Dale Hardy, Head Teacher at Sir Robert Pattinson Academy

James Bracey – Harikrishna Shah, Clinic Coordinator

Chris Woakes – Dr Samara Afzal – Doctor

Ben Stokes – Dr Vikas Kumar, Specialist in Anaesthetics and Critical Care

Saqib Mahmood – Kishan Aghada, Physiotherapist

Sam Curran – Victor Hinds, Hospital Distribution Officer

Ollie Pope – Yahya Hafejee, Support Leader at Department for Work and Pensions

Rory Burns – Sharmyn Kennedy, Teacher

Jos Buttler – Dr Jamasp Kaikhusroo Dastur, Surgeon

Dom Sibley – Mohammed Banaris, Operations Manager for G4S and ran COVID-19 testing centre

Chris Silverwood – Matthew Rammell, Respiratory Physiotherapist

Graham Thorpe – Dr Chris Boyson, Doctor

Phil Scott – Chantel Jacklin, Healthcare Assistant

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## Contacts



### **Kate Miller**

Press Contact  
Director of Communications  
media@ecb.co.uk



### **Jonathan Reed**

Press Contact  
Head of Media & Publications  
media@ecb.co.uk  
+44 (0) 7525 596 621



### **Danny Reuben**

Press Contact  
Head of Team Communications  
England Men's team  
danny.reuben@ecb.co.uk  
+44 (0)7825 723 620



### **Matt Somerford**

Press Contact  
Communications Manager - Domestic Cricket  
media@ecb.co.uk  
+44 (0)7551 134 716



### **Hen Cowen**

Press Contact  
Senior Communications Manager (they/them)  
hen.cowen@ecb.co.uk  
+44 (0)7585 987 302



### **Chris Tuttlebee**

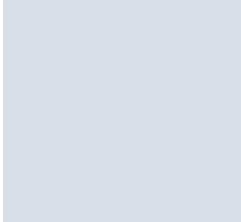
Press Contact  
Corporate Communications Lead  
chris.tuttlebee@ecb.co.uk  
+44 (0)7824 551713

**Emily Liles**

Press Contact

Communications Manager - Performance (England Women)

[emily.liles@ecb.co.uk](mailto:emily.liles@ecb.co.uk)

**Accreditation Team**

Press Contact

Accreditation

[accreditation@ecb.co.uk](mailto:accreditation@ecb.co.uk)

**ECB Press Office**

Press Contact

[media@ecb.co.uk](mailto:media@ecb.co.uk)