



Mar 21, 2018 10:58 GMT

Concussion Replacements, Player Conduct and bat sizes – a summary of changes to Laws, Playing Conditions and other regulations for 2018

Concussion Replacements will be available for the first time in all four professional domestic competitions this summer, in one of a number of significant changes to the Playing Conditions affecting the Specsavers County Championship, Royal London One-Day Cup, Vitality Blast and Kia Super League.

As a result of the changes, a team will be able to replace a player who has concussion or a suspected concussion, and the replacement will be permitted to bat and bowl. The replacement must be deemed a “like for like” replacement by the Cricket Liaison Officer appointed for each match, or by the umpires if a Cricket Liaison Officer is not present.

Other new features of the 2018 season, which follow the changes to the Laws of Cricket introduced by the MCC last autumn, include immediate on-field punishment for disciplinary offences and mock fielding, and restrictions on the size and shape of bats.

The full Playing Conditions are published on the ECB website -

<https://www.ecb.co.uk/governance/regulations> - with the amendments to the Laws of Cricket detailed here -

<https://www.lords.org/news/2017/september/new-changes-to-mccs-laws-of-cricket-come-into-effect/>.

Concussion Replacements

“This is a change made in the interests of player safety and health,” explains Dr Nick Peirce, the ECB’s Chief Medical Officer, who has been leading ECB research into concussion in cricket for several years. “While concussion is not as common in cricket as in contact sports such as rugby, our research has shown an average of around 15-20 incidents in first and second team cricket during each of the last few seasons.

“We have already mitigated against this by making helmets meeting the latest safety standards mandatory, and improving the levels of training for umpires and other officials. Now the ECB Board have approved a proposal from the Cricket Committee that we go a step further – with that proposal reflecting a very strong view from First-Class Counties.

“This season, each team, home and away, at first and second team level, will have to be supported by a medical professional who is qualified to make judgements on possible concussion following a head-strike. They will initially have a five-minute period to make an on-field assessment, and if concerns remain, that assessment will continue off the field, as previously. At this

stage, there is no Concussion Replacement – and there is no time limit on deciding whether or not the player can return to the match.

“But if the medical professional feels that the player has or may have been concussed, they will notify the Cricket Liaison Officer*. It will then be down to the CLO to approve the concussed player’s team’s nomination of a Replacement.”

Alan Fordham, the ECB’s Head of Cricket Operations, added:

“We appreciate that the phrase ‘like for like’ leaves a need for some flexibility and interpretation. We will take into account the cricket that remains to be played and will aim to replace the resource lost by the affected side - but not so much that they are advantaged by a concussion replacement. For example they would not gain permission for a specialist batsman to be replaced by a specialist bowler if they were bowling in the fourth innings, or for a fast bowler to be replaced by a spinner if that team were to be bowling later in the match.”

Further details of the ECB’s research into concussion are available here

<https://www.ecb.co.uk/video/636402/what-are-we-doing-about-concussion-in-cricket>

***In games when a Cricket Liaison Officer is not present – for example Kia Super League fixtures or county Second XI games – the umpires will be informed, and will make the “like for like” judgement.**

Player Conduct

The MCC introduced a new law, Law 42, last autumn, dealing specifically with players’ conduct.

Therefore, the four levels of offence introduced under Law 42, and the punishments for them, will be introduced in all four professional competitions this season.

So if a player is judged by the umpires to have committed a Level 1 offence, their team will receive an official warning that applies to every member of the team for the rest of the match. A further Level 1 offence in the match by any player from that team would then bring an automatic five-run penalty.

A Level 2 offence would incur an immediate five-run penalty.

Level 3 and Level 4 offences would lead to players being sent from the field, either temporarily or for the rest of the match, in addition to five-run penalties.

Details of the offences are listed in the attached Playing Conditions.

These on-field penalties will be imposed in addition to, rather than instead of, the off-field penalties that have been established for several years. So a Level 1 offence will still incur a reprimand; a Level 2 offence continues to carry a three-point penalty; a Level 3 offence six points; and a Level 4 offence nine points. These can lead to hearings, and punishment, including fines and suspension.

After the umpires have reported a disciplinary breach, the CLO will convene a meeting involving the umpires, the player and their coach. The level of disciplinary breach will then be determined by the CLO which may be a different level to that ruled by the umpires on the field – either higher or lower. They may have additional evidence that was not available to the umpires.

Alan Fordham said:

“Approximately 20 Level 1 or 2 offences in 2017 from about 700 matches reflects a good overall standard of behaviour but we are not complacent. The new Laws are an opportunity to continue the good work and we are keen also to support the recreational game through applying the same Laws and hopefully setting a good example.”

Bat Sizes

The ECB Cricket Committee and Board have also agreed to introduce the MCC's new Law 5, which restricts the thickness of edges of bats to 40mm, and the overall depth of bats to 67mm. Umpires will be equipped with bat gauges to check a bat's legality off the field or during play should they deem it necessary. The primary responsibility for using a bat that complies with Law 5 is of course with the players. Punishment for players using bats that breach the Law will be determined under the same Playing Regulation as the one covering changing the condition of the ball - penalties would be heavy and impactful.

Again, the changes in the professional game link to similar changes in recreational cricket. But players will have at least a year to prepare for the introduction of the new Law 5 being imposed in Premier Divisions and Minor Counties in 2019, before being extended to the rest of the recreational game in 2020.

Mock Fielding

There are a number of other changes to the Playing Conditions for 2018, most of them relating to changes in the Laws of Cricket. Many of these came into effect during the winter, affecting England for the first time in the Ashes, so this will be the first time they have operated in domestic professional cricket. Some of them were covered before the Ashes, here <https://www.ecb.co.uk/news/517443>. All are in the full Playing Conditions, as per the link above.

One other change which has been brought to the attention of players before the season concerns "mock fielding" – a deliberate attempt by a fielder to deceive the batsman. That is now covered by Law 41, Unfair Play – and will also be punished with a five-run penalty.

The ECB have distributed a number of videos detailing the new laws for 2018, specifically aimed at players and officials in the recreational game – a link to a brief summary of the changes as they apply to recreational cricket is available here <https://www.ecb.co.uk/be-involved/officials/resources>

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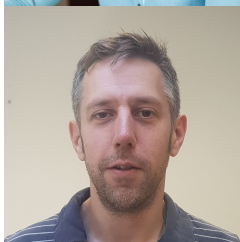


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