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Counties agree changes to women's and men's white-ball competitions

The Professional County Cricket Clubs (PCCs) have reached agreements to alter the formats of the Vitality Blast men's competition, the Vitality Blast women's competitions (Tiers 1 & 2) and the Metro Bank One-Day Cup women's competitions (Tiers 1 & 2) from next season.

The reasons and details of those changes for each competition are outlined below:

Vitality Blast men's competition

The required majority of the 18 PCCs voted to reduce the number of Vitality Blast men's competition group-stage matches from 14 to 12 from next season.

The reduction follows the recommendations of the county-led men's Domestic Playing Programme (DPP) review, which will also see the Vitality Blast men's competition revert to three groups of six counties, with the quarter-finals and men's Vitality Blast Finals Day played before The Hundred.

Women's white-ball county competitions

Yorkshire will move from Tier 2 into Tier 1 from the 2026 season which will mean an even split of nine counties in each of those two tiers next season.

The total number of Tier 1 group-stage matches across the women's Vitality Blast and women's Metro Bank One-Day Cup is retained at 28. The split of Tier 1 group-stage matches will change with 12 women's Vitality Blast matches (down from 14) and 16 women's Metro Bank One-Day Cup matches (up from 14).

The Tier 2 group-stage matches across both white-ball competitions will be reduced from 17 to 16 group-stage matches, with each county to play each other once in each competition during the group phase.

Vitality Blast women's competitions

The required majority of the 18 PCCs voted to reduce the number of Vitality Blast women's competition (Tier 1) group-stage matches from 14 to 12 for next season.

The vote was not tied to the outcome of the vote on the Vitality Blast men's competition. It was also agreed that the women's Vitality Blast Finals Day (Tier 1) will be expanded to include two semi-finals and a final.

The Vitality Blast Women's League 2 (Tier 2) will maintain eight group-stage matches, but move to a single group – changing from North and South Groups in 2025 – with a three-team Finals Day.

Metro Bank One-Day Cup women's competitions

The group stage of the Metro Bank One-Day Cup women's competition (Tier 1) will increase to 16 matches, which did not require a vote of the PCCs. It was additionally agreed to remove the two semi-finals and instead play a 2nd v 3rd Eliminator before the Final.

The Metro Bank One-Day Cup Women's League 2 (Tier 2) will be reduced from nine to eight group-stage games with each county playing each other once.

Men's Domestic Playing programme review

The DPP steering group includes six PCC Chief Executive Officers and representation from the Professional Cricketers' Association (PCA) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

Professional Game Committee chair, Mark McCafferty, said: "These changes to the men's Vitality Blast will be a springboard to further investment in an historic and much-loved domestic T20 competition which is recognised as one of the world's best.

"It's known for its intense local rivalries, and is central to the development of England's white-ball talent pool and to the financial performance of all 18 Counties.

"The new Group format intensifies the importance of many of these local derbies, and brings the quarter-finals and the iconic Finals' Day back into July, so improving the sporting and commercial narrative for sponsorship and TV partners , as well as meeting player wellbeing objectives by improving the group stage schedules and travel demands to allow players to perform at their very best.

"The re-vamp is part of the current work to further strengthen all our men's and women's domestic competitions and on behalf of the PGC, I'd like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Counties and to the PCA for their ongoing collaboration on this work, as we progress in the next phase to the Rothesay County Championship and the Metro Bank One-Day Cup.

"The PGC was set up by the ECB to drive these growth and development strategies in the domestic game and these first steps will build further impetus for this work".

ECB Director of the Women's Professional Game, Beth Barrett-Wild, said: "We have enjoyed a successful first season of the new women's county structure and it is exciting to plan out the next edition when Yorkshire will join Tier 1.

"The changes for 2026 were developed in consultation with the game and the players. The player representatives did voice a desire to increase the volume of cricket, to allow an even home-and-away Vitality Blast in Tier 1, but also recognised the scheduling challenges that would cause.

"There was always going to be a settling-in period across Tiers 1 and 2 during these first few seasons, and these changes are set to be for next summer only with a planned review again ahead of the 2027 season, when Glamorgan will move from Tier 2 into Tier 1. This will also follow another phase of learning as the new women's competitions embed into the overall county structure."

PCA Chief Executive, Daryl Mitchell, said: "Players are passionate about a thriving county game and a re-energised men's Vitality Blast is a positive step that will not just see players benefit, but counties, stakeholders and supporters with an improved chance of watching players at optimum levels.

"The directive from our members has been clear during this process and continues to be so. When players are growing increasingly worried about their physical and mental health, as well as their ability to perform at their best, something has to change so addressing back-to-back fixtures, travel and the volume of games will see game-wide benefits.

"We welcome the addition of Yorkshire to Tier 1 but also appreciate the scheduling challenges this brings. We look forward to a thorough consultation in 2026 where players views are essential on the schedule for when Glamorgan enter the professional structure."

ECB Chief Executive Officer, Richard Gould, said: "County cricket in England and Wales has long been the gold standard and it has been important that the counties have led the discussion in consultation with the game as we look to make all of our men's and women's county competitions the best they

can be.”

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Editor's notes

Vitality Blast men's competition

GROUPS

Group A: Derbyshire Falcons, Durham, Lancashire Lightning, Leicestershire Foxes, Notts Outlaws, Yorkshire.

Group B: Bears, Glamorgan, Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire Steelbacks, Somerset, Worcestershire Rapids.

Group C: Essex, Hampshire Hawks, Kent Spitfires, Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex Sharks.

Group-stage matches

Each county will play the other counties in their group on a home-and-away basis – a total of 10 matches. They will additionally play one home game against a county from outside their group and one away game against a county from outside their group.

This will allow counties to play against all 18 counties, over time, on a rolling basis during the group stage of the competition.

Knockout stage

The top two teams in each group plus the best two third-placed teams will progress to the quarter-finals. The winners of the quarter-finals will progress to men's Vitality Blast Finals Day.

Vitality Blast women's competition (Tier 1)

Group: Bears, Durham, Essex, Hampshire Hawks, Lancashire Thunder, Somerset, Surrey, The Blaze, Yorkshire.

Group-stage matches

Each county will play 12 group-stage matches – six home and six away. They will play four counties twice and four counties once.

Knockout stage

The top four counties at the end of the group stage will progress to women's Vitality Blast Finals Day, which will include two semi-finals and the Final.

Vitality Blast Women's League 2 (Tier 2)

Group: Derbyshire Falcons, Glamorgan, Gloucestershire, Kent, Leicestershire Foxes, Middlesex, Northamptonshire Steelbacks, Sussex Sharks, Worcestershire Rapids.

Group-stage matches

Each county will play eight group-stage matches – four home and four away. They will play each county either home or away.

Knockout stage

The top three counties at the end of the group stage will progress to Vitality Blast Women's League 2 Finals Day, which will include an Eliminator and Final.

Metro Bank One-Day Cup women's competition (Tier 1)

Group: Bears, Durham, Essex, Hampshire Hawks, Lancashire Thunder, Somerset, Surrey, The Blaze, Yorkshire.

Group-stage matches

Each county will play 16 group-stage matches – each county plays each other county at home and away.

Knockout stage

The top three counties at the end of the group stage will progress to the knockouts stages. The top county progresses straight into the final to meet the winner of the Eliminator between 2nd and 3rd place.

Metro Bank One-Day Cup Women's League 2 (Tier 2)

Group: Derbyshire Falcons, Glamorgan, Gloucestershire, Kent, Leicestershire Foxes, Middlesex, Northamptonshire Steelbacks, Sussex Sharks, Worcestershire Rapids.

Group-stage matches

Each county will play eight group-stage matches – four home and four away. They will play each county either home or away.

Knockout stage

The top four counties at the end of the group stage will progress to the knockouts stages. The winners of the two semi-finals progress to the final.

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