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## County captains predict Surrey hat-trick in annual survey

Surrey have been emphatically backed to win a hat-trick of Vitality County Championship titles by the 18 first-class county captains.

Ahead of the domestic summer starting tomorrow the ECB has released the results of the annual captains' survey.

The leaders of all men's county teams were asked to provide their predictions for the red-ball season with 12 of the 18 captains anticipating that Surrey skipper Rory Burns would lift the Vitality County Championship trophy for a

fourth time in seven years.

And they were equally as confident that record-breaker James Anderson is showing no sign of slowing down, with 12 tipping the 41-year-old to again take the most Test wickets for England this summer. Joe Root, who is 736 runs behind Sir Alastair Cook's all-time England Test record of 12,472 runs, was tipped to lead the England Men's runscorers by 10 county captains.

Yorkshire are expected to be promoted, with 14 captains predicting the White Rose will go up, while Middlesex (nine) and Sussex (seven) are the two counties viewed as most likely to join them.

Somerset young gun James Rew, who enjoyed a breakout red-ball summer last year with 1,086 runs to be third amongst Division One batters, was picked by 11 captains as one of their two most exciting Vitality County Championship players under 23.

Surrey's Tom Lawes earned four votes alongside England spin duo Rehan Ahmed and Shoaib Bashir following their exploits during the Test series in India.

No bowler has taken more than Simon Harmer's 173 Vitality County Championship wickets in the top division over the past three seasons, and five county captains expect the Essex off-spinner to lead the wicket-takers in Division One with Dan Worrall (Surrey) and Matthew Potts (Durham) the next best with three votes each.

Yorkshire and Middlesex's favouritism to be promoted by the captains appears to be on the back of strength across both batting and bowling.

Middlesex trio Toby Roland-Jones, Ethan Bamber and Ryan Higgins all attracted multiple votes to be leading wicket-takers, as too did Yorkshire new-ball bowlers Matthew Fisher and Ben Coad.

Leus du Plooy, who has made the switch from Derbyshire to Middlesex, and Yorkshire veteran opener Adam Lyth were the top two ranked batsmen in Division Two.

The ECB will publish the women's captains' survey ahead of the Rachael

Heyhoe-Flint Trophy, which starts on 20 April.

**County captains survey – anonymous predictions for the 2024 red-ball season:**

**Which county (not including your county) do you think will win Division One?**

12: Surrey, 2: Lancashire, 1: Durham, Essex, Hampshire, Warwickshire.

**Which two counties (not including your own) do you think will be promoted from Division Two?**

14: Yorkshire, 9: Middlesex, 7: Sussex, 4: Northamptonshire, 2: Derbyshire.

**Which player (not from your county) will be the leading run scorer in Division One?**

3: James Vince (Hampshire); 2: Dean Elgar (Essex), Keaton Jennings (Lancashire), Dan Lawrence (Surrey); 1: Tom Abell (Somerset), David Bedingham (Durham), Daniel Bell-Drummond (Kent), Josh Bohannon (Lancashire), Rory Burns (Surrey), Nick Gubbins (Hampshire), Sam Hain (Warwickshire), Dom Sibley (Surrey), Tom Westley (Essex).

**Which player (not from your county) will be the leading wicket-taker in Division One?**

5: Simon Harmer (Essex); 3: Matthew Potts (Durham), Dan Worrall (Surrey); 2: Kyle Abbott (Hampshire), Sam Cook (Essex); 1: Gus Atkinson (Surrey), Nathan Lyon (Lancashire), Chris Rushworth (Warwickshire).

**Which player (not from your county) will be the leading run scorer in Division Two?**

4: Leus du Plooy (Middlesex), Adam Lyth (Yorkshire); 2: Wayne Madsen (Derbyshire); 1: Cameron Bancroft (Gloucestershire), Finlay Bean (Yorkshire),

Harry Brook (Yorkshire), Chris Dent (Gloucestershire), Shan Masood (Yorkshire), Sam Northeast (Glamorgan), Jack Morley (Derbyshire), Prithvi Shaw (Northamptonshire).

**Which player (not from your county) will be the leading wicket-taker in Division Two?**

3: Ben Coad (Yorkshire), Toby Roland-Jones (Middlesex); 2: Ethan Bamber (Middlesex), Matthew Fisher (Yorkshire), Ryan Higgins (Middlesex), Ollie Robinson (Sussex), Ben Sanderson (Northamptonshire); 1: Zak Chappell (Derbyshire), George Scrimshaw (Northamptonshire).

**Who will score the most runs for England Men in Test cricket this summer?**

10: Joe Root (Yorkshire); 3: Zak Crawley (Kent); 2: Harry Brook (Yorkshire), Ben Duckett (Nottinghamshire); 1: Ollie Pope (Surrey).

**Who will take the most wickets for England Men in Test cricket this summer?**

12: James Anderson (Lancashire); 2: Matthew Potts (Durham), Chris Woakes (Warwickshire); 1: Ollie Robinson (Sussex), Mark Wood (Durham).

**Who are, in your opinion, the two most exciting young England-qualified players (not from your county – and aged 23 or under at start of year) to watch out for in the Vitality County Championship this summer?**

11: James Rew (Somerset); 4: Rehan Ahmed (Leicestershire), Shoaib Bashir (Somerset), Tom Lawes (Surrey); 2: Ben McKinney (Durham), Tawanda Muyeye (Kent), Ollie Price (Gloucestershire), John Turner (Hampshire); 1: Finlay Bean (Yorkshire), James Coles (Sussex), George Hill (Yorkshire), Noah Thain (Essex).

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## Contacts



### **Matt Somerford**

Press Contact

Communications Manager - Domestic Cricket

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

+44 (0)7551 134 716