



Saqib Mahmood (left), Olly Stone and Craig Overton (Getty Images)

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## ECB announces the award of the first England Pace Bowling Development Contracts

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced today the introduction of the England Pace Bowling Development Contracts. Three players are the first recipients - Saqib Mahmood – Lancashire, Craig Overton – Somerset and Olly Stone – Warwickshire.

Under the terms of the new contracts, personnel from the ECB's National Performance Centre will provide more contact time with a group of high

potential young seam bowlers and greater control, in collaboration with their County, over their playing programmes through both the summer and the winter months.

The three players continue to be employed by their respective County, but with the ECB making a significant contribution to the employment costs.

As part of the agreement, the player commits to make himself available to participate in the England Lions Individualised Player Programme and Lions Tour, subject to selection.

Ashley Giles, Managing Director - England Men's Cricket, said:

“Having a strong supply line of high-quality seam bowlers is an essential ingredient for sustained England Team success in both white-ball and red-ball cricket.

“We are very grateful to the First-Class Counties for agreeing to this, in particular, Lancashire, Somerset and Warwickshire. We are committed to working very closely with them to best develop players for the long-term benefit of English cricket and to ensure they are at their very best to perform at optimum levels throughout the domestic campaign.”

Mahmood earned his first England call-up this winter for the tour of New Zealand after a standout white-ball summer for Lancashire. The 22-year-old right-arm seamer added eight T20 wickets to his competition-leading 28 in the Royal London One-Day Cup for the red rose County. He played three times in England's IT20 series victory over New Zealand. Mahmood has been selected in England's three-match ODI series against South Africa, which starts next month in Cape Town and has been selected in the red-ball squad for the England Lions tour of Australia towards the end of February.

Overton, the most experienced of the trio, is highly regarded by the England set-up and has represented the senior side in Test and ODI formats respectively. His last Test cap came against Australia in the fourth Ashes Test last summer at Emirates Old Trafford, and he was recently called-up to the tour of South Africa as cover for the seamers. The 24-year-old will play a pivotal role during the England Lions tour of Australia, which starts later this month.

Stone, 26, made his Test debut against Ireland in July after impressing the England set-up in four ODIs during England's tour of Sri Lanka in 2018. After a stress fracture of the lower back curtailed most of his 2019 campaign, he is returning to full fitness. He attended a fast bowling camp in South Africa in December, alongside Jimmy Anderson and Mark Wood, and showed the progress that he is on-track to regain full fitness ahead of the 2020 campaign with Warwickshire.

The players will remain under contract until September 30 2020.

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