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ECB launches inaugural tape ball competition across Core Cities

It's a game of thrills, spills, passion and drama – now a brand new national competition is being launched to showcase the best of tape ball cricket from diverse urban communities across the country.

Ahead of the start of England Men's and Women's international series against Pakistan next month, England stars Adil Rashid, Dawid Malan, Heather Knight and Sophie Ecclestone will today help launch the inaugural National Core Cities Tape Ball Competition, part of the ECB's Core Cities programme designed to engage diverse communities in urban areas, break down barriers

and drive grassroots participation.

Tape ball is a variation of the game which originated in Pakistan and is now played across the country and all over the world, often within South Asian communities. A tennis ball is physically taped up to create swing and bounce variations in play. No protective equipment – such as helmets or pads - is needed as the ball remains soft and the game can be played on any surface, in any area, making it widely accessible and popular.

The format was identified as a key area for potential growth of the game at the Core Cities Summit in November 2023 because of the casual format's accessible nature. Now its profile is due to be elevated through the annual competition – the National Core Cities Tape Ball Competition - with hosting duties shared among the Core Cities, welcoming more people into cricket.

Each of the Core Cities - Birmingham, Bradford, Kirklees, Leeds, Leicester, London (Middlesex, Essex and Surrey), Luton, Manchester, Sandwell, Slough and Nottingham - can have a women's and a men's team in what will be two separate competitions. The inaugural competition will be held at Bradford Park Avenue this weekend, with the ambition of promoting inclusivity and fostering grassroots engagement while also identifying and nurturing talent.

The tournament will be launched with an event held in Birmingham today, attended by England Women's, Men's and Disability stars, Heather Knight, Adil Rashid, Sophie Ecclestone, Dawid Malan and Jamie Goodwin. This launch event will be a true festival of tape ball cricket, with kids from Chance To Shine giving it a try and adult teams competing across three matches with celebrity and professional players accompanied by local South Asian food and entertainment.

The event also takes place in the build-up to England Women's and Men's joint upcoming series against Pakistan, which kicks off with the Women's T20I at Edgbaston on May 11, 2024.

Adil Rashid, England Men's world no.1 T20 bowler said: "I used to play tape ball in the street with my brothers and it would get really competitive. It's such a great format of the game, can be played anywhere by anyone and that's what cricket should be about. It's brilliant that there's now a national tape ball competition. It's really important to give people across the country the opportunity to play.

“The British Pakistani community is cricket mad, the game unites us and the upcoming series is going to be incredible for the players and fans – we’re going to put on a show.”

ECB Managing Director of the Recreational Game, Leshia Hawkins, said: “Tape ball is such an exciting and accessible form of cricket. Born on the streets of Karachi, it’s already played passionately in many communities across England and Wales and shows that you don’t need lots of equipment or expensive grounds to enjoy playing cricket.

“As we continue our collective efforts to make cricket the most inclusive team sport in England and Wales, the new competition we’re launching today will give players an extra chance to showcase and hone their skills.

“And with England Men and Women facing their Pakistan counterparts in white ball series next month, we’re looking forward to experiencing the passion of crowds and communities enjoying the contests - whether it’s watching friends and family competing to lift the National Core Cities Tape Ball trophy, or seeing some of the world’s best cricket players competing on the international stage.”

To find out more about tape ball cricket or the competition go to www.ecb.co.uk/tapeball.

Tickets for the England Women series against Pakistan Women are selling fast. Secure your seats at www.ecb.co.uk/tickets/England

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