



Netting has resumed at some cricket clubs. Photo: Getty Images

May 28, 2020 14:30 BST

ECB update on the domestic and recreational game

- **DELAY TO PROFESSIONAL DOMESTIC SEASON EXTENDED UNTIL AUGUST 1**
- **THE ECB AND PROFESSIONAL GAME GROUP (PGG) WILL WORK TO CREATE A NUMBER OF OPTIONS FOR A SHORTENED OR REFORMATTED SEASON**
- **SUSPENSION OF RECREATIONAL GAME CONTINUES, BUT HOPES FOR A POTENTIAL EARLIER RETURN OF JUNIOR CRICKET TO BE SHARED WITH GOVERNMENT**

The England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB) can today confirm a further delay to the start of the professional domestic cricket season, with no domestic cricket to be played before August 1.

The specifics of the season remain subject to ongoing advice from UK Government and health experts, but the ambition remains to host domestic men's and women's cricket across England and Wales later this summer.

The Professional Game Group (PGG) will look to outline a number of opportunities for domestic play, which will be presented to the ECB Board in June. These plans include a number of options for both red-ball and white-ball cricket including matches played at all First Class Grounds, the use of a regional group model as well as consideration for matches played behind closed doors or with a limited number of supporters whilst strictly adhering to Government guidance on social distancing. The working group is also exploring options where non-televised games can be live streamed for members and supporters.

As the ongoing COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, these scenarios will be worked on and assessed. Learnings from the return-to-training programmes for England Men's players will be incorporated, in addition to those sourced from any international matches played behind closed doors.

The recreational game currently remains suspended until further notice - [with the sole exception of the use of outdoor cricket facilities \(nets and pitches\) for the purpose of undertaking exercise](#). The ECB will seek to progress discussions with the UK Government to begin mapping out a return, including the potential for an earlier return of junior cricket.

ECB Chief Executive Officer, Tom Harrison, said: "Naturally we want to see cricket being played at every level. We remain hopeful of seeing both domestic and recreational cricket this season and planning with the PGG has allowed us to map a number of potential scenarios for domestic play. Whilst traditional formats of our competitions are the preference, we are not against exploring the unorthodox to ensure that we can return our players to the field.

"That can only happen though when it is safe, and we have said throughout this crisis that the safety and well-being of everyone involved in the game is our key priority.

"We have learned a lot and continue to learn about the safety protocols that would need to be in place to stage international cricket behind closed doors in this environment and those protocols will also need to apply to the domestic game.

"Across the recreational game it has been heart-warming to hear of clubs where players have returned to the nets. As children start returning to school in the coming weeks, we look forward to exploring how those guidelines and learnings can be deployed for cricket. This can then see the recreational game continue its phased return as soon as we have Government approval."

Ends

Editorial Notes:

In modelling the revised schedule, the ECB is focusing on:

1. Public safety, health and well-being of players, operational staff and cricket fans;
2. The most financially important forms of cricket for our First-Class Counties: International cricket and the Vitality Blast to help ensure the future of 18 First-Class Counties and the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC);
3. Working closely with our broadcast partners to provide as much live cricket as possible to cricket fans; and
4. Supporting the women's game to continue its growth journey

The broader game

As the situation unfolds, consultation will be ongoing between the ECB, First-Class Counties, MCC and Professional Cricketers' Association to understand the changing concerns and needs of the professional game's chief stakeholders.

The Original March-July Domestic Schedule

1. The English professional domestic cricket season was scheduled to begin on March 24 with the traditional Champion County match between holders Essex and MCC in Galle, Sri Lanka.
2. The men's County Championship was due to start on Sunday April 12 and in total 10 rounds were scheduled up to August 1.
3. The Vitality Blast was due to commence on May 28 and all group-stage matches were to be staged before the end of July.
4. The men's Royal London Cup was due to begin on July 19. A total of 41 matches in the competition were due to be played before the end of July.
5. Fifty-over matches between National Counties and First-Class Counties had been scheduled from July 15-17.
6. It was announced in April that the launch of the men's and women's The Hundred competitions, which were due to begin in July, have been postponed until next summer.

ENDS

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