



Lord's Cricket Ground (Getty Images)

Apr 24, 2020 09:00 BST

ECB announces further delay to the professional cricket season

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 10.00AM (BST) ON FRIDAY
APRIL 24 2020**

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has today agreed that no professional cricket will be played in England and Wales until at least July 1 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The season remains subject to ongoing advice from government and health experts, and continued consultation with all broadcast partners to determine

the optimum way to fulfil fixtures both domestically and internationally.

The ECB Board approved the following measures:

- **Professional cricket will not be played in England and Wales until at least July 1**
- **Nine rounds of fixtures will be lost in the County Championship season, but blocks for red-ball and white-ball cricket will be held in a revised schedule**
- **The Vitality Blast will be pushed as late in the season as possible to give it the best opportunity of being staged. All matches previously scheduled in June will be moved later in the season**
- **International cricket, featuring England men's and women's teams, will look to be scheduled from July until the end of September, with the West Indies Test Series and the whole women's series against India (Vitality IT20s and Royal London ODIs) both moving from their original slots**
- **An additional Board meeting will be scheduled next Wednesday on The Hundred, following a request to dedicate a further session to the competition**

ECB Chief Executive Officer, Tom Harrison, said:

"Our role as a national governing body during a crisis of this scale requires us to carefully plan alongside cricket's stakeholders and supporters to attempt to overcome COVID-19's impact on this season.

"As much as we remain hopeful that we can deliver some cricket this summer, we are in the midst of a worldwide crisis and our priority - over and above the playing of professional sport - will be to protect the vulnerable, key workers and society as a whole.

"That's why, simply put, there will be no cricket unless it's safe to play. Our schedule will only go ahead if Government guidance permits.

"Our biggest challenge, along with other sports, is how we could seek to implement a bio-secure solution that offers optimum safety and security for all concerned. The guidance we receive from Westminster will help us shape

how we deliver this.

“Our plan is to reschedule international matches as late as possible in the season to give the best chance of play. The Vitality Blast will also now occupy the latest possible season slot to offer as much time as possible to play a County short-form competition.

“I want to thank everyone involved in this complex and sensitive work. There have clearly never been times like this and my colleagues at the ECB and across the game have been exemplary in this period. It has been refreshing, but not surprising, to see how cricket has come together.”

Ends

Editorial Notes:

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

1. Public safety, health and wellbeing 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.

Fixtures in the first season of the new women's regional competition are currently scheduled for later in the summer and will be given further consideration down the line.

The suspension of recreational cricket remains until further notice.

The Original April/May/June Cricket Schedule

1. The English professional domestic cricket season was scheduled to get underway on March 24 with the traditional Champion County match between holders Essex and MCC in Galle, Sri Lanka.
2. The MCCU matches were due to commence in the first week of April while the County Championship would have started on Sunday April 12.
3. In total there were nine rounds of County Championship action scheduled up to July 1.
4. The Vitality Blast was due to commence on May 28 and would have had 11 group matches up until the end of June.
5. England men's three-match Test series against West Indies was due to start at the Kia Oval on June 5 followed by the second Test at Edgbaston on June 12 and the third Test at Lord's commencing on June 25.
6. Two England women's IT20s against India were planned for June 25 and June 27 at Bristol and Taunton.

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