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## Metro Bank One-Day Cup men's competition preview

Glamorgan will begin the defence of their Metro Bank One-Day Cup men's competition title when the competition begins on Tuesday 5 August.

The ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay has identified the players to watch, and young guns to keep an eye on, as they look at each county's hopes of lifting the 50-over trophy when the final is staged at Trent Bridge on Saturday 20 September.

### GROUP A

## DERBYSHIRE FALCONS

*Previewed by Nigel Gardner - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay.*

**Captain:** Brooke Guest

**2024 Position:** Fourth (Group A)

**2024 Most Runs:** Harry Came (281)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Zak Chappell (17)

**Why they can win the competition:** Although Wayne Madsen, Aneurin Donald and Pat Brown are playing in The Hundred, Derbyshire could go deep into the competition if players like Chappell and Australian opener Caleb Jewell fire. The return from injury of all-rounder Luis Reece adds quality and experience while Ben Aitchison brings a cutting edge to the seam attack.

**Player to watch:** Martin Andersson has played some significant innings in the Rothesay County Championship since he made the switch from Middlesex and with Madsen and Donald missing, this is a chance for him to play a leading role with the bat in the white-ball game. An outstanding fielder, his seam bowling will provide Guest with another option.

**Young gun:** Joe Hawkins impressed on his step up to the first team in the County Championship at Northampton and the 18-year-old off-spinning all-rounder is expected to get further chances to show his potential in the Metro Bank One-Day Cup. A recent call-up to the England Under-19 squad is a measure of his progress and this competition provides a platform for him to build on that.

**Final thought:** The Falcons were expected to be a contender in the Vitality Blast but after a disappointing tournament, they now have another opportunity to show they are a better one-day side than those results suggest. On their day, they have the players to mount a strong challenge and the disappointment in the T20 format could be a motivating factor over the next few weeks.

## ESSEX

*Previewed by Martin Smith – ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Tom Westley

**2024 finish:** Seventh (Group B)

**2024 most runs:** Robin Das (309)

**2024 most wickets:** Jamal Richards (15)

**Why they can win the competition:** With only four players seconded to The Hundred – compared with six last year – Essex will in theory have a larger pool of players to pick from. However, their plans were disrupted when Indian pace bowler Khaleel Ahmed belatedly pulled out of his all-formats contract; Essex are busily trying to sign an overseas replacement for at least part of the competition.

**Player to watch:** Robin Das top-scored last year, topped by an unbeaten century in a rare win at Trent Bridge. He has not built on that this season with only a couple of disappointing outings in both the Rothesay County Championship and Vitality Blast. If he finally rediscovers his form, it could reignite his career and lead to a memorable few weeks.

**Young gun:** Though still only 20, Luc Benkenstein has been a mainstay of Essex's Metro Bank One-Day Cup team since his 2021 debut. He made his mark the following year with 6-42 against Glamorgan, though barely bowled last season because of injury. Now a Blast regular, the leggie will boost the spin options as well as adding big-hitting cameos down the order.

**Final thought:** Essex have won just seven of 24 One-Day Cup fixtures since they reached the semi-finals in 2021 – and four of 16 in the past two seasons – with some heavy defeats along the way. It is going to take a massive improvement in performance from essentially the same group of players, allied to some astute tactical acumen from captain Tom Westley, to turn around their white-ball fortunes after a torrid Blast campaign.

## GLAMORGAN

*Previewed by Blake Bint - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Kiran Carlson

**2024 Position:** Champions

**2024 Most Runs:** Colin Ingram (297)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Andy Gorvin & Dan Douthwaite (19)

**Why they can win the competition:** As defending champions, the Metro Bank One-Day Cup has felt like a homecoming for Glamorgan, reaping their most success in recent years, winning in 2021 also. David Harrison will lead the team (Richard Dawson away with Welsh Fire) after he was interim head coach and assistant for their previous two success and can lean on a new exciting support staff including Ian Harvey who supported Dawson to success in this competition with Gloucestershire.

**Player to watch:** Billy Root in a crucial stage in his career could have a more senior, important role to play. The 32-year-old in his final year contracted at Glamorgan has spent most of the season in the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI, often captaining, however came into his own with 296 runs in this tournament in 2024. With Mason Crane and Ben Kellaway selected in The Hundred, Root could be turned to with ball in hand also.

**Young gun:** Jersey international Asa Tribe has shown significant signs of improvement from last year where he top scored with just 26 across six matches. A first red-ball century followed by an ever-present status in the Vitality Blast middle-order, Tribe's influence on the Glamorgan side has come from nowhere. The 21-year-old with an ODI century on his record will look to play a big role at the top of the order this time around.

**Final thought:** Glamorgan will be missing a key part of their team's success in this competition of recent years – Colin Ingram. The 40-year-old South African taking up a first assistant coach role is still eligible but is expected to step back from playing for this competition. Despite the lack of a frontline spinner, Andy Gorvin and Dan Douthwaite were joint top wicket takers (with



Ed Barnard) in 2024. Douthwaite will be missing early as a short-term injury replacement in The Hundred, but if they can replicate that success with the step up from younger squad members, there's no reason why this side can't go back-to-back.

## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

*Previewed by Richard Latham - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Jack Taylor

**2024 Position:** Fifth (Group B)

**2024 Most Runs:** Miles Hammond (363)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Ajeet Singh Dale (13)

**Why they can win the competition:** Less affected than most rivals by call-ups to The Hundred (only four), Gloucestershire proved themselves a one-day force by winning last season's Vitality Blast. Despite making a nightmare start to that competition this summer, they reeled off four successive group wins at one stage, beating the likes of Hampshire and Essex.

**Player to watch:** At the age of 32, Gloucestershire's red-ball captain Cameron Bancroft boasts more than 3,000 runs in List A cricket at an average of over 40, with five hundreds, and will provide a wealth of experience at the top of the batting order. The Australia Test player has already produced innings of 163 and 176 in the Rothesay County Championship this season.

**Young gun:** Seam bowler Aman Rao signed for Gloucestershire just before the start of the Vitality Blast and played in the first two group matches against Kent and Sussex. The 21-year-old Loughborough University student is sure to be given more opportunities in the Metro Bank One Day Cup and his height combined with an ability to swing the ball could see him make a significant impact.

**Final thought:** With head coach Mark Alleyne involved in The Hundred, bowling coach Mark Thorburn takes charge for the second successive year

and will be determined to make a better start than last season when the team lost their first two group matches before winning four of the next five and just failing to reach the knock-out stage.

## **HAMPSHIRE**

*Previewed by Alex Smith - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Nick Gubbins

**2024 Position:** Quarter-finals

**2024 Most Runs:** Ben Brown (286)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Brad Wheal (13)

**Why they can win the competition:** Hampshire have been a force in 50-over cricket for a couple of generations, having only failed to qualify for the knockouts in one of the last six editions of the One-Day Cup. With largely the same set of players to pick from as 2024, Hampshire have experience at all ages. Scotland international Brandon McMullen's arrival from August 13 knits the team together with bat and ball, while Indian sensation Tilak Varma will be around for the opening three fixtures.

**Player to watch:** Eddie Jack might still only be 19, but he has certainly graduated from simply being a “young gun”. The tall and very quick fast bowler put Test players KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal in his back pocket when playing for England Lions earlier in the summer, where Andrew Flintoff became a big fan. Expect him to be in the top wicket-taking reckoning.

**Young gun:** Given his first professional deal to play in the competition, Ben Mayes comes with a gigantic reputation in age-group cricket. The 17-year-old batter is on England's long-term radar with Under 19s and Professional County Club Select XI recognition this summer. Come for the wristy hockey-influenced boundaries, stay for the big scores. Fast bowler Manny Lumsden is also worth keeping an eye on.

**Final thought:** Three successive progressions from the group stages, three

heartbreaks in the knock-outs – with the last two inflicted by Leicestershire. Could this be the year they take the final leap to silverware? Former captain Jimmy Adams - a winner in two List A finals and now a highly-regarded coach - will step up to lead the side, with Adi Birrell leading Southern Brave Men in The Hundred. It may well be a good audition to taking the top job full-time when it next becomes vacant.

## **LEICESTERSHIRE FOXES**

*Previewed by Jon Culley - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Peter Handscomb

**2024 Position:** Semi-finals

**2024 Most Runs:** Peter Handscomb (539)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Tom Scriven (18)

**Why they can win the competition:** Winners in 2023 and semi-finalists last year, Leicestershire are a side brimming with confidence and no shortage of quality. Current man-of-the-moment Rehan Ahmed will be otherwise engaged, but overseas batting stars Peter Handscomb and Shan Masood and explosive opener Sol Budinger will compete for the spotlight in his absence. Why would they not fancy themselves for more 50-over glory?

**Player to watch:** After a relatively modest contribution to the Foxes' Vitality Blast campaign, Pakistan Test captain Shan Masood will be keen to make his mark in this competition, playing a format in which he has enjoyed considerable success, averaging 52.48 with 15 hundreds. That could make the left-hander a dangerous opponent.

**Young gun:** Josh Hull may be unavailable due to The Hundred, but Leicestershire can replace him with another 6ft 7ins fast bowler in Alex Green, who may still be growing at just 18 years old. Genuinely quick, Green took four wickets in three appearances in the competition last season and has further underlined his potential for England Under-19s against their India equivalents this summer.

**Final thought:** The 2023 Metro Bank One-Day Cup Final will be forever remembered for wicketkeeper-batter Harry Swindells producing the match of his life, making a career-best 117 not out to rescue his side from 89 for six and set up an unlikely Foxes victory. It is a little poignant then, on the eve of this year's tournament, that the Leicester-born player has had to announce his retirement from cricket at the age of just 26 because of a persistent finger injury.

## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

*Previewed by Jon Culley - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Haseeb Hameed

**2024 Position:** Fourth (Group B)

**2024 Most Runs:** Ben Slater (398)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Rob Lord (11)

**Why they can win the competition:** The Outlaws lacked consistency last year but with confidence high after a good season with the red ball they have enough quality - especially in the batting - to mount a challenge, even if call-ups to The Hundred will test the depth of their bowling resources, with the likes of Rob Lord and James Hayes hoping for the opportunity to impress.

**Player to watch:** Opener Ben Slater is a batter opponents always hope to see the back of early, given an apparent penchant for List A cricket. His 68 appearances in the format have yielded more than 3,000 runs at a remarkable average of 52.75. A career-best 164 in a win over Surrey at Guildford last year took his List A centuries tally to eight.

**Young gun:** The outstanding batter in Nottinghamshire's Second XI this season with close to 700 runs, 18-year-old right-hander Sam Seecharan is highly thought of at Trent Bridge and after making his senior debut in the last of the Outlaws' Vitality Blast fixtures is likely to be given a chance to shine in the Metro Bank One-Day Cup campaign.



**Final thought:** The One-Day Cup sees Notts stalwart Paul Franks take on the role of head coach, with Peter Moores joining up with Trent Rockets for The Hundred. Franks - 20 years a Nottinghamshire player - has been assistant head coach since 2017, helping the county win the Blast (twice), the One-Day Cup and promotion to Division One in the Rothesay County Championship in that time. This is his first opportunity to lead the county to a senior title in his own right.

## **SURREY**

*Previewed by Mark Baldwin, ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Rory Burns

**2024 Position:** Eighth (Group B)

**2024 Most Runs:** Ryan Patel (363)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Cameron Steel (17)

**Why they can win the competition:** It will be a tough ask given the absence of 15 leading players at The Hundred, but as in previous seasons Surrey will be approaching the Metro Bank One-Day Cup with a positive vision of the competition giving precious first-team experience to a raft of youngsters. There is still a hard core of senior players, too.

**Player to watch:** Cameron Steel will be looking at this year's competition as the perfect opportunity to showcase his proven all-round talents as a middle-order stroke-maker and leg-spinner with a knack of taking important wickets. A comparative lack of game time in Surrey's Rothesay County Championship side this summer will only add to that desire.

**Young gun:** Ollie Sykes has already been blooded in all formats, including making 11 appearances to date in the Vitality Blast. But it was in last year's One-Day Cup, when the big-hitting 20-year-old left-hander made his first three starts in the competition, that he initially gave notice of his huge promise with 87 not out against Essex at Chelmsford.

**Final thought:** With no overseas player available, Surrey will be relying on the international experience of skipper Rory Burns, Dom Sibley, Ben Foakes and fast bowler Matt Fisher – plus the know-how of Steel and Ryan Patel – to steer a predominantly youthful line-up in which the performances of the likes of Sykes, Josh Blake, James Taylor and Yousef Majid will be carefully monitored.

## **WORCESTERSHIRE RAPIDS**

*Previewed by Sam Rhymes – ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Jake Libby

**2024 Position:** Quarter-final

**2024 Most Runs:** Jake Libby (526)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Jack Home (16)

**Why they can win:** Worcestershire are blessed with the availability of many first-team regulars who are not affected by selection in The Hundred, meaning the majority of Alan Richardson's first-choice eleven will be involved for the Rapids across the tournament. Skipper Jake Libby and mid-season signing Khurram Shahzad will look to show their quality and blend with some exciting youngsters to compete for silverware.

**Player to watch:** Tom Taylor. Having registered the most wickets for Worcestershire so far this season, the right-arm seamer has been in stand-out form across all formats this summer for his side. The 30-year-old has made his name as a frugal opening bowler and will be looking to continue his consistent performances that have yielded him an impressive average of under 25 across both formats.

**Young gun:** Henry Cullen. The exciting 22-year-old wicketkeeper featured during this year's Vitality Blast having been on the radar for some time at Visit Worcestershire New Road. His eye-catching displays for the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI have forced an opening into the senior set-up, with this competition the perfect platform for the cultured and efficient young batter to show off his skills.

**Final thought:** A promising end to the Vitality Blast campaign will offer supporters hope that the Rapids white-ball form can extend further into the summer, with the likes of Ethan Brookes central to any hopes of bettering last year's encouraging quarter-final finish. Having lacked consistency throughout the summer, the exciting crop of youngsters will be looking to breakthrough and enjoy successful campaigns in a side more than capable of challenging deep into the tournament.

## **GROUP B**

### **DURHAM**

*Previewed by Graham Hardcastle - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Alex Lees

**2024 Position:** Fifth (Group A)

**2024 Most Runs:** Colin Ackermann (316)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Paul Coughlin (12)

**Why they can win the competition:** Durham are coming off the back of an excellent Vitality Blast campaign, which saw them finish second in the North Group. They were 50-over finalists in 2021 and will be desperate to win their first white-ball title since 2014 when they won a previous incarnation of this competition. Their squad is well balanced and hasn't been ravaged by the Hundred.

**Player to watch:** Ollie Robinson, the 26-year-old wicketkeeper-batter, hasn't played in this competition since 2022 due to Hundred commitments. That season, he won the title as a Kent player. He scored a career-best 206 not out during that particular campaign. This season, he's available to his county and is likely to be a linchpin of their top order.

**Young gun:** Wicketkeeper-batter Haydon Mustard, 19, is set for his first first-team exposure of 2025 in this competition. An ever-present last year in the lower middle order, the former England U19 posted a top-score of 35. He

even hit a six in a match against Lancashire at Sedbergh which was caught in the crowd by his dad, Phil.

**Final thought:** South African overseas quick Codi Yusuf is available for this competition. He represented the county in the Rothesay County Championship during the first half of the summer before heading off to Zimbabwe in late June and early July to make his Test debut for the Proteas, taking the new ball and claiming 10 wickets in a 2-0 series victory. He returned to the Riverside on a deal until the end of the season and will add significant firepower to Durham's bowling attack.

## KENT SPITFIRES

*Previewed by Fred Atkins - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Grant Stewart and Harry Finch

**2024 Position:** Seventh (Group A)

**2024 Most Runs:** Jack Leaning (262)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Matt Parkinson (12)

**Why they can win the competition:** Only three first-teamers are playing in The Hundred and the white-ball squad looks significantly stronger than the red. Kent won this competition as recently as 2022 and six of the team that surprised a full-strength Lancashire in that final are still with the club, although whether the Warwickshire-bound Nathan Gilchrist will be selected is uncertain.

**Player to watch:** Harry Finch keeps on reinventing himself. A player who openly admits he wasted the first part of his career with Sussex, he got a second chance at Kent, taught himself to keep wicket and this year has starred at both number three and as an opener in the Vitality Blast. Asked what he'd try his hand at next, he replied: "football".

**Young gun:** Orpington-born, batting all-rounder Ekansh Singh has broken into the Rothesay County Championship side this season and recently starred for

the England Men U19s, making a century in the second Youth Test at Chelmsford. The 19-year-old also went to school in Tonbridge, a town that's nurtured talent including Colin Blythe, Colin Cowdrey and Ed Smith.

**Final thought:** Politics derailed Kent's 2024 campaign - Ben Compton was sidelined, reportedly due to his contract situation, and Kent sorely missed his ability to pace an innings, as a bowler-heavy line-up threw away a chance of qualification. This time round the business has been done early, with Compton and Joey Evison, player-of-the-match in the 2022 final, both signing new deals while leg-spinning all-rounder Mohammed Rizvi has been signed after impressing with the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI.

## LANCASHIRE

*Previewed by Graham Hardcastle - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Marcus Harris

**2024 Position:** Ninth (Group A)

**2024 Most Runs:** Josh Bohannon (274)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Charlie Barnard (8)

**Why they can win the competition:** As mixed as their performances have been in the Rothesay County Championship this summer, Lancashire were excellent in the Vitality Blast, finishing top of the North Group and qualifying for the quarter-finals. If they can transfer that momentum into 50-over cricket, they will have a chance. But their senior players have to be better in this competition than they were last year.

**Player to watch:** Josh Bohannon is Lancashire's linchpin batter in this format and has been their leading run-scorer in the past two campaigns, scoring a century in each of them. Former England Lions captain Bohannon is likely to bat at number three with the aim of batting through the innings and cashing in at the end.

**Young gun:** Left-arm spinner Charlie Barnard led the way for the Red Rose in



last season's competition with eight wickets and impressed hugely on their pre-season tour of India. A wily spinner, an old head on young shoulders type, the 20-year-old took four wickets in three Vitality Blast matches in late May and early June and should be front and centre over the next month.

**Final thought:** Lancashire, bottom of the pile last year, have not won a major List A title in more than a quarter of a century but came close in this competition in 2022 when they were beaten by Kent in a Trent Bridge final. Australian overseas batter Marcus Harris will captain the Red Rose, with Keaton Jennings and Sir James Anderson both having been selected in The Hundred. They have also signed emerging batting all-rounder Arav Shetty until the end of the season.

## MIDDLESEX

*Previewed by Ben Kosky - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Ben Geddes

**2024 Position:** Sixth (Group A)

**2024 Most Runs:** Joe Cracknell (306)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Luke Hollman (12)

**Why they can win the competition:** One cause for optimism should certainly be the depth of Middlesex's pace attack. Ireland left-armers Josh Little will bring plenty of international white-ball experience to the table, supported by a clutch of exciting young talents such as Noah Cornwell, Naavya Sharma, Sebastian Morgan and Jamie Feldman – all under 21 and hungry to impress.

**Player to watch:** Ben Geddes. The 24-year-old has performed well in both four-day and T20 formats since his winter move across the Thames from Surrey, can bat anywhere from one to seven and has earned his captaincy opportunity. With many top-order regulars involved in The Hundred, the 50-over tournament should provide further opportunities for Geddes to shine.

**Young gun:** Naavya Sharma. The pacy 19-year-old was leading wicket-taker

for England Under-19s in their Test series against Sri Lanka last summer and Middlesex were unafraid to pitch him in at the deep end for their County Championship campaign this year. Sharma bowled consistently, repaying the club's faith by claiming six wickets in their innings victory over previously undefeated Leicestershire.

**Final thought:** Middlesex are notoriously slow out of the blocks in this tournament, having failed to win their opening fixture since 2019 – a year that also brought the county's most recent appearance in the knockout stages.

Despite losing spinner Zafar Gohar to injury, Middlesex's bowling options look strong. The question may be whether they can put match-winning totals on the board – the likes of Sam Robson, Ben Geddes and Joe Cracknell may need to go big more often than not.

## **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE STEELBACKS**

*Previewed by Jeremy Blackmore - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Lewis McManus

**2024 Position:** Eighth (Group A)

**2024 Most Runs:** Prithvi Shaw (343)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Justin Broad (13)

**Why they can win the competition:** Despite losing more players to The Hundred than ever before, Northamptonshire boast a strong squad who mounted an impressive challenge in the Vitality Blast. They are boosted by Indian leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal who has been in devastating form in the Rothesay County Championship and Tim Robinson, fresh from New Zealand's recent white-ball tour of Zimbabwe.

**Player to watch:** Last season's leading wicket-taker, allrounder Justin Broad is firing with bat and ball, with back-to-back scores of 150 plus in the Championship during July.

**Young gun:** After impressing in the Second XI and Academy, 17-year-old spinner Nirvan Ramesh recently signed a two-month rookie contract and was named in the squad for the recent Championship game against Derbyshire to give him more experience. Highly rated by the coaching staff he looks set to feature during the Metro Bank One Day Cup.

**Final thought:** Northamptonshire need to channel the white-ball form that saw them open their T20 campaign with six straight wins. Even without key bowlers in Ben Sanderson and George Scrimshaw, Northamptonshire can call on a battery of seamers led by Broad and the experienced Luke Procter. The Steelbacks will also hope Kiwi international Robinson can help plug the run-scoring gap left by the prolific Saif Zaib on Hundred duty.

## **SOMERSET**

*Previewed by Richard Latham - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** To be named

**2024 Position:** Finalists

**2024 Most Runs:** Andy Umeed (492)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Jack Leach (15)

**Why they can win the competition:** The loss of eight players to The Hundred is less than last season when Somerset still finished runners-up in the Metro Bank One-Day Cup, winning six of their eight group games and a semi-final against Leicestershire before losing a rain-affected final against Glamorgan. That was the third trophy to narrowly elude the team last summer and the bitter memory will strengthen resolve to go one better.

**Player to watch:** Alfie Ogborne was a regular in Somerset's One Day Cup team last season, claiming ten wickets, including two in the final against Glamorgan. The 22-year-old left-arm seamer from Yeovil supported the club as a boy and will be desperate to make an impressing after being named in the squad for recent County Championship games without making the final eleven.

**Young gun:** At the tender age of 17, Thomas Rew already boasts the fastest century for England Under-19s, made against India this summer, and looks set to follow elder brother James into the Somerset team on a regular basis, having made his debut in this season's Vitality Blast. Long rated the club's brightest prospect, the One Day Cup looks sure to showcase his special talent.

**Final thought:** Even without the players on duty in The Hundred, Somerset have enough experience blended with exciting young talent to deservedly rank among the favourites for the One-Day Cup. Support for 50-over cricket remains strong at the Cooper Associates County Ground and the team are guaranteed fervent backing while looking to capitalise to the bat-friendly pitches at their home venue.

## **SUSSEX SHARKS**

*Previewed by Bruce Talbot - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** John Simpson

**2024 Position:** Ninth (Group B)

**2024 Most Runs:** Tom Haines (326)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Henry Crocombe (10)

**Why they can win the competition:** Sussex regard the Metro Bank One-Day Cup primarily as a development competition and the focus will again be on giving youngsters opportunities. Many will be better for the experience they had in 2024, even though they only won one game, and if they can make a good start they could make the knockout stages, as they did in 2022 with a similarly inexperienced team.

**Player to watch:** Henry Crocombe was one of the stars of Sussex's Vitality Blast campaign with 15 wickets in his nine games and he was their leading wicket-taker in the One-Day Cup last season. With his strong action, the 23-year-old is capable of bowling with serious heat and will relish his likely role as leader of the seam attack.

**Young gun:** George Thomas has had few opportunities since his winter move from Somerset, but the opening batter offered glimpses of his potential when he broke into the Vitality Blast team. He made his maiden hundred in this competition last year for his former county and a run of games will offer the 21-year-old an opportunity he should relish.

**Final thought:** Batting coach Grant Flower will be in charge for this competition, and it will be interesting to see his approach. Sussex only won one game last year, but they lost twice by one wicket and were competitive in most. John Simpson, who missed three games last year, will be captain for the tournament which is a welcome development. So is the return to Arundel which stages its first one-day game since 2013 against Kent as part of a four-day festival of cricket.

## **WARWICKSHIRE**

*Previewed by Brian Halford - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Ed Barnard

**2024 Position:** Semi-finals

**2024 Most Runs:** Ed Barnard (433)

**2024 Most Wickets:** Ed Barnard (19)

**Why they can win the competition:** Semi-finalists last season, Warwickshire have some talented young players who drive the team in this competition. A year on from the under-performance in the last four against Glamorgan at Cardiff, those emerging players are more experienced and better-equipped to handle the bigger, make-or-break games.

**Player to watch:** Kai Smith. The wicketkeeper batter is pushing hard to become a regular in all formats. Solid behind the stumps, he bats with a freedom and power which can transform games. His unbeaten 130 from 104 balls against Worcestershire at Edgbaston in this competition last season was a scintillating exhibition of how to turn pressure back on the opposition.



**Young gun:** Hamza Shaikh. Although only just turned 19, top-order batter Shaikh has some first-team cricket under his belt now in both first-class and 50-over formats. His 84 and 112 as captain of England Men U19s against India at Beckenham last month suggests he is ready to take the next step and deliver match-shaping innings for his county.

**Final thought:** Ian Westwood's first season as head coach at Edgbaston has contained some promising signs - Warwickshire have delivered some eye-catching Rothesay County Championship wins and qualification for the Vitality Blast quarter-finals. To lift the Metro Bank One-Day Cup would assure supporters that their side is settling again after the long period of transition since winning the 2021 County Championship – and also underline Ed Barnard's credentials to be the next club captain.

## **YORKSHIRE**

*Previewed by Graham Hardcastle - ECB Reporters Network supported by Rothesay*

**Captain:** Dom Bess

**2024 Position:** Sixth (Group B)

**2024 Most Runs:** Will Luxton (247)

**2024 Most Wickets:** George Hill (17)

**Why they can win the competition:** Added to Jonny Bairstow, Harry Brook, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid and Joe Root, Yorkshire have - as things stand - only got two other players away at the Hundred. They are Jafer Chohan and Jordan Thompson. They are determined to put right a failed Vitality Blast campaign which saw them win only five games and finish second bottom in the North Group.

**Player to watch:** All-rounder George Hill, aged 24, is having a great summer, especially with his seamers. He has topped the 40-wicket mark in the Rothesay County Championship and has gained England Lions recognition. In the last few years in 50-over cricket, Hill has posted a score of 130 in the middle order and has returned a haul of 6-30 with the ball.

**Young gun:** David Lloyd lives close to top-order batter Will Bennison's club, Sheriff Hutton Bridge, and has watched lots of the 18-year-old. Bumble even announced Bennison's maiden rookie professional contract on Yorkshire's social media accounts last month, saying: "He's the real deal". Bennison loves to score runs in big chases. Expect to see him later in the competition, as Yorkshire start off with experience.

**Final thought:** With Jonny Bairstow and Dawid Malan - Yorkshire's Championship and T20 captains - away at The Hundred, spin-bowling all-rounder Dom Bess will lead Yorkshire's pursuit of a first limited overs trophy since 2002. They beat Somerset in the Cheltenham and Gloucester Trophy final that year when current head coach Anthony McGrath was in the team. The White Rose will have Pakistani top-order batter Imam-Ul-Haq available to them for the duration of the competition, and look well placed to have a crack at the title.

ends



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