



Left to right: Josh Marden of Beckenham CC (Outgrounds Trophy winner), Lee Fortis of Surrey CCC (Benard Flack Memorial Trophy winner), Steve Martin of Kent CCC (One Day Cup winner)

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## Surrey's Lee Fortis claims top Grounds Manager award for third consecutive year

Surrey's Head of Ground Staff, Lee Fortis has claimed the award for the best multi-day pitches for the third consecutive year at the 2024 Grounds Manager of the Year Awards held at Trent Bridge.

Fortis and his team at the Kia Oval earned consistently outstanding marks for their County Championship and Rothesay Test pitches during the 2024 domestic and international season to win the Bernard Flack Memorial Trophy.

This is also the fourth time in total that Fortis has scooped the prize since starting his role since 2012.

The event celebrated the successes and efforts of all the ground staff involved in producing surfaces for professional cricket in England and Wales and was attended by 104 people in total, with all First-Class Counties represented.

The One Day Cup for the best one day pitches was scooped by Adrian Llong (Kent CCC) with perfect marks in all but one match at the Spitfire St Lawrence Ground.

Kent's Josh Marden also won the Outground pitches trophy for his efforts at Beckenham, while the Head Grounds Managers collectively recognised the efforts of: Stuart Kerrison (Essex CCC), Andy Ward (Leicestershire CCC), Paul Collett (Gloucestershire CCC) and Andy Noyes (Glamorgan CCC) who have all given 40 years or more continuous service to their respective counties.

Recognition was given to Tom Cowley (Hampshire CCC) as an Outstanding Contributor and a round of applause was also given to Stephen Manfield (Worcestershire CCC) for so comprehensively recovering the ground following an unprecedented eight floods that completely devastated the cricket square over the winter following the 2023 season.

It was the event's pleasure to also present Jasmine Nicholls (Yorkshire CCC) with the Rising Star Award she won at last week's Business Of Cricket Awards. Nicholls became the first woman to prepare a pitch at Headingley earlier this year when she led the team at the stadium to cultivate conditions for the England v Pakistan Women's Vitality IT20 game,

**ECB Pitch and Grounds Advisor, Andy Mackay, said:** "The amount of effort, dedication and sacrifice required from the grounds teams should never be underestimated, but 2024 was an especially difficult year for most due to the consistently poor weather for much of the cricket season. It's fantastic that we can get together to celebrate and recognise this group and the contribution they make to the game, without whom our players could not provide such a thrilling spectacle.

"The standard of pitches in white and red-ball cricket continues to be very

high overall and as ever, the competition for the top spots is exceedingly tough. The award winners deserve this recognition for the consistently outstanding pitches they have produced during the summer.”

**Full list of awards winners:**

**Bernard Flack Memorial Trophy (Multi-Day pitches)**

Winner: Lee Fortis (Kia Oval)

Runner-up: Richard Robinson (Headingley)

Commendation: Karl McDermott (Lord's)

**One-Day pitches:**

Winner: Adrian Llong (The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence, Canterbury)

Runner-up: Gary Barwell (Edgbaston)

Commendations: Andy Ward (Uptonsteel County Ground, Grace Road), Ben Gibson (The 1<sup>st</sup> Central County Ground, Hove)

**Outground Pitches Award:**

Winner: Josh Marden (Beckenham)

Runner-up: Christian Brain (Cheltenham College)

Commendations: Nick Johnson (Blackpool CC), Brad Jeffries (Kidderminster CC)

**Outstanding Contributor:** Tom Cowley (Hampshire County Cricket Club)

**Business Of Cricket Awards, Rising Star:** Jasmine Nicholls (Yorkshire County Cricket Club)

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