



Jul 03, 2018 09:59 BST

Vitality Blast, 2018

County cricket's T20 competition returns this week with a new name, ticket sales at record levels – and Finals Day at Edgbaston in September already a sell-out.

Vitality will be the title sponsors of the Blast for the next four years as a central part of their backing of T20 cricket, including home men's and women's England internationals – and the Vitality Blast begins on Wednesday with three fixtures, including Sky's televised opener from Trent Bridge, a repeat of last year's final between the holders Notts Outlaws and the Birmingham Bears.

That will be followed by the first London derby of the season between Middlesex and Surrey at Lord's on Thursday (July 5), with other local rivalries between Somerset and Gloucestershire, Worcestershire Rapids and Birmingham Bears (both July 6), Hampshire and Sussex Sharks (July 12) and Lancashire Lightning and Yorkshire Vikings (July 20) also set to attract packed crowds during the early stages of the competition.

After a collaborative marketing campaign between the ECB and the 18 counties which saw a repeat of last year's successful co-ordination of tickets going on sale on March 1, sales across the 18 counties are at record levels, and almost 20% up on the equivalent stage last summer – when the Blast attracted a record aggregate attendance of 902,000.

A comprehensive multi-channel nationwide advertising campaign was launched at the start of June, featuring county-specific cinema advertising to drive awareness of the Vitality Blast competition - for example Notts Outlaws, ahead of their opener against the Bears <https://we.tl/6vNfkMzWAu>

That game will be the first of 26 Vitality Blast matches shown live on Sky Cricket in the space of 45 days culminating in the last round of group matches on August 17 – including eight matches which are being staged as double headers with fixtures from the women's Kia Super League.

Sky will then show all four Blast quarter finals on consecutive days from August 23-26 – and Finals Day on September 15.

Edgbaston will host Finals Day for the sixth year running and the 10th time in all, this year on Saturday September 15 – and Warwickshire County Cricket Club today announced that all tickets have been sold, other than the allocation that are held back for each of the four counties who make the semi-finals. That means a 60% increase on this time last year, and the likelihood of another capacity crowd of just under 25,000, boosted by a temporary stand that Edgbaston has brought in to meet the high demand.

Tom Harrison, the ECB's Chief Executive Officer, said:

“ECB and the 18 Counties have developed a great partnership in promoting the competition; that's clear in the level of interest and volume of ticket sales before the Vitality Blast starts this week.

“We’re going to see compelling cricket and strong crowds with some exciting overseas signings and England’s white-ball specialists available to play more often.

“Vitality start their partnership with the County competition more popular than ever, following a Royal London One-Day Cup Final that attracted its biggest crowd since 2009 and in the middle of a perfect spell of weather across the UK.

“Vitality Blast promises a thrilling three months of cricket.”

Vitality Blast 2018 – key dates

Wednesday July 4, opening fixtures: South Group – Essex Eagles v Sussex Sharks; North Group – Northamptonshire Steelbacks v Leicestershire Foxes, Notts Outlaws v Birmingham Bears.

Friday August 17: Last round of group fixtures.

August 23-26: Quarter Finals

Saturday September 15: Finals Day (Edgbaston)

You'll find all ECB Media Releases and associated resources on our [Newsroom](#)
>

Contacts



Kate Miller

Press Contact
Director of Communications
media@ecb.co.uk



Jonathan Reed

Press Contact
Head of Media & Publications
media@ecb.co.uk
+44 (0) 7525 596 621



Danny Reuben

Press Contact
Head of Team Communications
England Men's team
danny.reuben@ecb.co.uk
+44 (0)7825 723 620



Matt Somerford

Press Contact
Communications Manager - Domestic Cricket
media@ecb.co.uk
+44 (0)7551 134 716



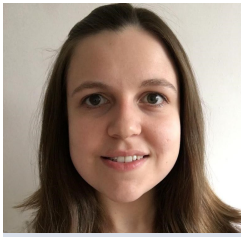
Hen Cowen

Press Contact
Senior Communications Manager (they/them)
hen.cowen@ecb.co.uk
+44 (0)7585 987 302



Chris Tuttlebee

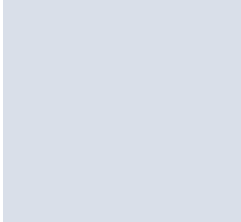
Press Contact
Corporate Communications Lead
chris.tuttlebee@ecb.co.uk
+44 (0)7824 551713

**Emily Liles**

Press Contact

Communications Manager - Performance (England Women)

emily.liles@ecb.co.uk

**Accreditation Team**

Press Contact

Accreditation

accreditation@ecb.co.uk

**ECB Press Office**

Press Contact

media@ecb.co.uk