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Vitality Blast and Metro Bank One Day Cup align with women's game to drive professionalism and growth

Men's and women's professional domestic T20 and 50-over competitions will be fully aligned for the first time next season in further steps to fuel the growth and reach of women's professional cricket.

The move will see men's and women's teams competing side by side in the Vitality Blast and the Metro Bank One Day Cup from the 2025 season.

The eight women's Tier One professional county teams will compete in the **Vitality Blast women's competition** and **Metro Bank One Day Cup women's competition**, played alongside the Vitality Blast men's competition and Metro Bank One Day Cup men's competition.

The development comes in collaboration with ECB's partners, health and life insurer Vitality and Metro Bank, as they continue to work with the ECB to invest in, grow and support the women's game, seeking to inspire many more women and girls to play and watch the game.

The aligning of the men's and women's competitions and the decision from Vitality and Metro Bank to further their ongoing support for women's domestic cricket signifies the next step in the game's evolving professionalism.

The new professional structure will see £8m new funding per year being invested into women's domestic cricket by 2027 – taking annual investment in this area to c.£19m – and could produce an 80% increase in the number of professional female players in England and Wales by 2029.

Like the Vitality Blast Men's Finals Day, the women's competition will culminate in a Vitality Blast Women's Finals Day, while the men's and women's Metro Bank One Day Cup competitions will each have two semi-finals and a flagship final.

Competition schedules and venues will be announced later this year, with the expectation that men's and women's double headers are likely to form some part of the aligned Vitality Blast schedule.

In addition, the eight women's Tier One professional county teams have confirmed their names ahead of the new season.

In the Metro Bank One Day Cup the eight women's teams will compete as: Durham, Essex, Hampshire, Lancashire, Somerset, Surrey, Warwickshire and The Blaze.

In the Vitality Blast the eight women's teams will compete as: Birmingham Bears, Durham, Essex, Hampshire, Lancashire Thunder, Somerset, Surrey and The Blaze.

A knock-out cup competition consisting of teams from all three tiers of the expanded women's domestic structure will also form part of the 2025 schedule. The aim of the cup competition is to provide all Counties with the opportunity to compete against each other, play at some of the country's biggest venues, and give players across the pyramid the chance to test their skills on an elevated platform.

Director of the Women's Professional Game Beth Barrett-Wild said: "A big driver for the re-organisation of women's professional cricket has been to enable us to better use the leverage and existing scale of men's county cricket to accelerate fanbase growth for our women's teams and players. Looking ahead to the 2025 season, we're therefore really excited to fully align our men's and women's domestic white-ball competitions for the first time.

"The next step in the growth of the women's professional game is to produce commercially vibrant and visible teams and competitions that excite fans and continue to showcase the quality of women's cricket.

"As we have seen through The Hundred and alignment of our England Men's and England Women's teams, we believe that by putting our men's and women's competitions and players on the same platform we can exponentially increase the reach of the women's domestic game and intensify the depth of feeling fans have for our women's teams moving forwards.

"I'd like to thank both Charlotte Edwards and the family of Rachael Heyhoe Flint for allowing us to name our two domestic trophies the Charlotte Edwards Cup and Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy during this first chapter in the professionalisation of women's domestic cricket. There are no two women in the history of the game in this country who are more synonymous with and symbolic of the progress that has been made in recent times, and it was truly fitting that their names be lent to our first women's professional competitions across the 2020 to 2024 seasons. Teams in the Metro Bank One Day Cup women's competition will compete to lift the Rachael Heyhoe Flint trophy."

Neville Koopowitz, CEO at Vitality, longstanding supporter of men's and women's cricket and title partner of the Vitality Blast women's competition and men's competition, said: "The power of sport and activity to change and help people live healthier lives is at the very centre of what we do. Having role models and people you identify with playing at the very highest level of

cricket is important in helping increase participation of the game at every level.

“Today’s announcement is the culmination of close collaboration with the ECB and our commitment to further invest in the game in a way that brings about greater visibility and further growth within women’s cricket and women’s sport in general. This is undoubtedly an important moment and step in pushing for greater equality and further professionalising the women’s game.”

Danielle Lee, Brand and Marketing Director at Metro Bank, Official Champion of Women’s and Girls’ Cricket and title partner of the Metro Bank One Day Cup women’s competition and men’s competition, said: “We’re thrilled that our support for the game, that spans from recreational cricket up to England Women, will now extend to the naming of the Metro Bank One Day Cup women’s competition. At Metro Bank we’re committed to driving transformational growth of girls’ cricket, and through this evolution in the women’s professional game we hope to see even more role models for young girls wanting to get into and stay in cricket.”

Notes To Editors

(i) Vitality is the Official Title Partner of England Men’s and England Women’s IT20s, the Official Title Partner of the Vitality Blast, Official Wellness Partner of The Hundred, Official Wellness Partner of Test cricket, and Official Partner of the ECB.

(ii) Metro Bank are the Official Title Partner of England Men’s and England Women’s ODIs, the Official Title Partner of the One-Day Cup in England & Wales, Official Champion of Women and Girls, Official Women’s Team Partner and Official Partner of the ECB.

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