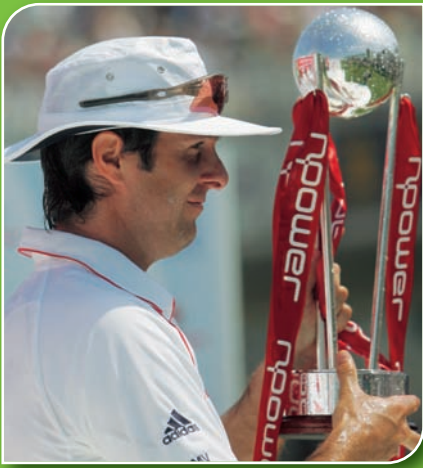


# THE PLAYERS' VIEW

## THE HEALTH OF OUR GAME 2010 AND BEYOND

June 2008





# THE PLAYERS' VIEW

The health of our game 2010 & beyond

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After key research in 2007, the PCA has continued to stay in close touch with the game and the players as we enter a new cricketing landscape. The game, players and administrators are facing their toughest tests in history but also an exciting period of new challenges and opportunities.

We have now analysed data from our 2008 pre-season questionnaires, answered by 334 players including the England squad. The research was then sent back into the dressing rooms, to be re-considered before this document was prepared, to include views on the developing of Twenty20 and domestic landscape.

The comments back up the players' views canvassed over recent years and documented in 2007 in our Tougher Structures document.

It is clear that the significant new monies generated since the advent of Indian cricket leagues, Stanford Twenty20 and potential Champions League have unbalanced the cricketing landscape globally. Opinion on how the game should evolve is currently divided.

Player salaries for Indian Premier League (IPL) are reflecting increased market value and potentially life changing. Sums of money offered by Stanford and the currently 'unauthorised' ICL are also extremely attractive and the game and the players should be grateful for the cash injections and vogue status.

Should we be overly concerned by a Twenty20 takeover? Player research indicates that the pathways to the top are through England representation but there are still sizeable numbers of players who consider IPL and ICL attractive. Many of whom would risk a 12 month County ban to pursue ICL. A window for IPL seems a sensible option and we should applaud the BCCI for taking a product and turning it into a multi million pound global extravaganza.

It seems unlikely that any other competition around the cricketing world could put as much money on the table and create a competition of equal proportions in the near future and therefore IPL will remain a threat, a force and an opportunity to the cricketing world for some time to come.

Since 2007 our core aims and beliefs have not changed:

### Core beliefs

Players know that the success of the England team and the success of the county game are inexorably linked. Playing considerations must be considered in unison with commercial factors.

Cricket is best served when the all the cricketing family works together in partnership.

### PCA aims

- Competition structures to ensure maximum intensity, integrity and quality in each match.
- Focus on quality not quantity.
- De-clutter the season so that it is easier for spectators to understand.
- Help create commercially viable structures.

Many have talked about reducing the levels of cricket. Last season our survey showed 49% of players thought we played slightly too much. The question is, how much cricket could be reduced in order to create meaningful time for rest, recuperation and practise? Would any reduction be eaten away with more one-day cricket? Changes to the structure have been made since then and need to be recognised.

New changes to the Friends Provident (FPT) 50 over competition and a reduction of overs in 4 day cricket seem to have made a significant difference to standards, but they need to be judged properly after a full season.

Players do recognize the difficulty in trying to find the perfect structure both commercially and in cricketing terms and that is reflected in this years views.

## HEADLINE STATISTICS

334 players surveyed including the England squad

### INDIAN LEAGUES

- **50% of the England players said they would consider retiring from International cricket prematurely to play IPL**
- 45% of all players said that they would consider signing up for ICL knowing there was a ban in place
- 73% feel that the large sums of money being offered in ICL, IPL and Stanford will motivate the younger generation to hone their skills on Twenty20
- 89% thought that freedom of movement (no restrictions) should prevail in regard to Indian cricket leagues

### DOMESTIC STRUCTURE

- 88% of all cricketers ultimate ambition is to play International cricket
- 84% believe there should be 3 competitions
- 82% believe that it should be 4 day championship, 50 overs & Twenty20
- 95% believe that domestic cricket should mirror international cricket as much as possible
- 88% rated the County Championship as the most important competition, but ...
- **62% rate the Championship as the most important competition** (post Stanford & Champions League)
- 90% ranked Pro40 as the least important and believe it has no value in the current cricketing structure
- 56% said that they believe Twenty20 and its growing popularity threatens other forms of the game

### INTERNATIONAL CRICKET

- 93% of players believe it important that Test cricket maintains its current status within the International game
- 75% of England players believe that a Test Championship needs to be included in any new FTP (Future Tours Programme)
- **79% of all players still believe 50 over ODI cricket has a place, believing it should maintain its current status at International level**

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Balance any new robust commercial structure with key cricketing development needs

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- Concentrate on a 3 competition structure closely mirroring International cricket

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- Maintain 2 divisional county championship structure

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- Increase prize money for winning County Championship to £1m

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- Abandon 40 over cricket

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- Encourage ICC to restructure Future Tours Programme (FTP) & create a meaningful Test Championship

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- Create a window for IPL

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- Remove restrictions on players who play in ICL

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- Restrict numbers of non-England qualified cricketers to balanced and acceptable levels

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- ECB to consult properly with the games key stakeholders on all issues affecting the game

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- ECB to create an ongoing strategy for consumer feedback at every level of the professional game each year

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- Develop better 2nd XI cricket structures as matter of importance

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- Put more time and resource into recreational club cricket structures

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## INDIAN CRICKET LEAGUES

### Current situation

The existence of two rival leagues in India have created a number of opportunities for players, but also several potential threats both to players and our domestic clubs.

The advent of the new Indian cricket leagues are probably the most significant development in world cricket since Packer revolution 30 years ago. In less than one year they have created the following:

- 1. The largest ever investment in a domestic cricket league (IPL)**
- 2. Alternative employment for leading players, which has significantly increased their market value.**
- 3. Raised the profile of cricket globally through increased interest as more money pours into the game.**
- 4. New financial modelling for cricket franchises**
- 5. Created an opportunity for the game's administrators to capitalize on the new revenue opportunities that Twenty20 has created through improved financial modelling for the domestic structure.**
- 6. Created the potential for "copycat leagues" in England.**
- 7. Brought a new revenue stream into cricket through the "billionaire investor"**
- 8. Provided the platform for the Champions league with potential to drive additional revenues into our domestic clubs.**

### Issue for consideration

They only benefit the top 10% of players.

Unauthorised cricket – does it present a genuine threat to our domestic league and broadcasting revenues?

Currently the "unauthorized" ICL has attracted more PCA members than its competitor the IPL, primarily because its schedules fit outside of our own domestic season.

The financial rewards offered by the Indian leagues will entice players to retire from County and International cricket early and senior players at that. This would have the potential to significantly devalue our TV rights as well as reducing the attraction of English cricket to the fans.

Based on current practice it is unlikely that these players would be replaced in our domestic sides by young home grown talent.

The current imbalance between remuneration for Twenty20 cricket and the longer forms of the game does present a very real threat to the existing fabric of the game.

Another significant issue with the IPL is the fact that it clashes with our own domestic season. Should English players be made available to play in IPL then this will remove them from any county availability at the start of our domestic season. This will weaken the level of competition in our own tournaments. Should the IPL decide to expand into the latter part of the year then the FTP will be put under further pressure to restructure itself.

## The Players' view

To support the fact that the Indian Leagues are attractive to players

- \* 50% of England international players said that they would consider retiring from International cricket prematurely to play in the IPL. The impact on the strength of our international sides would be huge.
- \* 45% of all players would consider playing in the ICL despite the ban being in place.
- \* 56% of players feel that Twenty20 and its growing popularity threaten the other forms of the game.
- \* 89% opposed any ban being implemented as they felt that they should be free to ply their cricketing trade and freedom of movement should prevail.

## PCA recommendations

Embrace the benefit of the Indian leagues and learn from them as they will have a 2 year head start on any English copycat league. Our leading players and coaches should participate not only to improve their personal financial position but primarily to develop their games and skills in the atmosphere of intense international competition.

Players and coaches learning can then be imported back into our own domestic league, much as England has traditionally provided a finishing school for many players who go on to become successful internationals for their own countries then we must try and exploit the same system in India for our best Twenty20 players.

Explore the financial models that best suit our game without prejudice to develop the most robust, entertaining and financially successful Twenty20 domestic competition.

Remove any ban on player movement.

Create a window in the FTP for the IPL in March/April. Countries cannot duplicate the financial clout of India subsequently it will prove too strong a draw for the top players to resist.

Piggy back the growth in interest and coverage generated by the Indian leagues to improve our existing domestic Twenty20 and to develop a market leading domestic Twenty20 tournament in England to capitalize on the back of Twenty20 World Cup in 2009. The increased visibility of the world's leading players performing in England must be galvanized to grow interest, revenues and participation in cricket.

## STANFORD

### Current situation

The introduction of the billionaire investor proves that cricket in the Twenty20 form has huge financial appeal and potential.

The ECB announced the biggest non-broadcast partner in English cricket history with the Stanford sponsorship which amounts to more than 3 times that of the next biggest English cricket sponsor per annum.

The England and Wales Cricket Board and the West Indies Cricket Board, announced a new five-match series for the richest team prize for a single sporting match of US\$20million.

ECB chairman Giles Clarke explained that the new series represented the boards' commitment to supporting the worldwide growth of Twenty20 cricket and the opportunities for its players:

"We are confident that this agreement will reward the players appropriately, develop the English game and deliver benefits to a wide range of cricketers."

The ECB said: "We are delighted that the Team England Player Partnership, the PCA and the ECB are aligned concerning the potential benefits to cricket and proposed reward structures of our negotiations with Sir Allen Stanford."

Aside from the one-off matches, Stanford will also bankroll, at a cost of \$9.5million (£4.8 million) per year, five annual quadrangular tournaments, which will be held in England.

"We have had advanced talks that will come to fruition in the next few months, including a quadrangular series," said Sir Allen Stanford.

Stanford total investment in English cricket would therefore amount to circa US\$29.5m per annum for a total of 4 days cricket. If you compare this investment of circa £4 million per day with that of the next biggest sponsor, you will understand the warmth of the welcome he received.

### Issues for consideration

Money generated from these tournaments will also be diverted into grass roots cricket with the objective of growing the participation in key regions.

This investor also provides the ECB with the opportunity to create new Twenty20 events that are bankrolled from a private individual. The proposed quadrangular events provide further commercial properties to exploit in the form of TV rights, tickets and event sales, all of which will provide, if managed professionally, significant additional revenues into the English game.

Winner takes all-the marketing model is a sound one which will enable the sponsor to gain global interest in the game (build global awareness for their brand).

## The Players' view

As outlined in their statement the players welcome the investment of Sir Allen Stanford and the benefits that it can bring to them personally and to the game as a whole.

The players do have concerns over how the Stanford prize monies add more to the argument of imbalance between the rewards for the longer and shortest forms of the game. Many of their concerns mirror those created by the IPL.

Players must give up their personal image rights and in most cases advertising space on their bats to accommodate Stanford branding requirements, which is a concern for their existing sponsors.

## PCA recommendations

Can the billionaire investor contribute to the long term health of the game? Certainly as long as player burnout is managed effectively by the coaches and that the ECB develop and drive value into the other areas of the game through these style events.

Develop a balanced remuneration package to reflect Test match bonuses being brought in line with international Twenty20 events.

Include domestic English sides within the Stanford WI tournament-it fits within our winter schedule, would provide additional Twenty20 experience for our top domestic team/players as well as additional close season revenue opportunities.

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

### Current situation

The Champions league concept has been mooted amongst various domestic boards for many years, and it failed to materialize because of lack of finance. Now that barrier has been removed. On the eve of our domestic Twenty20 season the ECB announced through their Chairman, Giles Clarke, as follows: 'We are extremely grateful to our great friends from Australia, India and South Africa for their hard work and determination to get this tournament off the ground. The ECB Twenty20 Cup will be even more fiercely contested this season in the knowledge that the two teams who reach the final will qualify for the Champions League and the chance to win \$5m. I am sure that the demand for tickets for this year's ECB Twenty20 Cup will be greater than ever.

'We are already aware of a number of broadcast and commercial partners who are anxious to become involved with cricket's latest exciting venture.' Source ECB press office

In reply the BCCI responded:

Modi told Cricinfo that the Champions League was "still a long way away" and what has been agreed upon by various boards so far is "only an in-principle agreement" to host such an event. "The venues have not been decided, the dates are still open and we are trying to host the event this year," Modi said.

The BCCI are the commercial drivers for this new competition and as a result are the most influential party in its development. However the BCCI's appetite for the Champions league does not match that of the other boards primarily because their own domestic IPL raised US\$2 billion and the Champions League has a projected commercial value of between US\$5-10million.

There is also confusion over player eligibility-who does he play for if he represents more than one team who qualify?

The champions League does have a strong global TV appeal by the very nature of the variety of teams that it hosts-it is easy for broadcasters to buy the competition on the basis that the country will support it's home team.

### Issues for consideration

Engaging the BCCI to maximize the commercial benefits to other boards.

Modi also clarified that "any ICL player playing for any team automatically disqualifies that team from participating" in the Champions League. "No exceptions will be made under any circumstances," Modi said. Source cricinfo

How will Counties and the ECB cope with this stance?

If developed correctly the Champions league could become a central pillar to our domestic structure as Twenty20 has presented the biggest cash cow cricket has ever seen.

## Players' views

The amount of Champions League prize monies on offer for counties is 25 times greater than for the 4 day championship, subsequently players views of relative importance of our domestic tournaments has changed significantly.

Prize monies are traditionally allocated exclusively to the players-obviously the clubs themselves will need to share in any prize money for investment in the club.

## PCA recommendations

We await details from Australia as to the rules and regulations of the tournament, we await the governance structures from the ECB and finally we await the commercial development and ownership structures from the BCCI. Only once these have been received will our domestic teams and players better understand the potential impact of the Champions League.

As demonstrated with the influence of prize money over players views on importance of our domestic tournaments, the imbalance of prize money will leave our 4 day domestic competition in dangerous financial health.

## 12 MONTHS CONTRACTS

### Current situation

There are currently discussions on the merit of all-year-round professional contracts. Few Counties offer such terms at present, however many players are paid their salaries over 12 months. Many players also commit to stringent workloads throughout the winter period while not under contract or receiving additional payment.

Contracts covering the whole year could be a benefit to our players and the knock-on effect may be an enhanced domestic structure

- **Increased professionalism**
- **Enhanced Personal Development / Future career opportunities**
- **Still allows overseas cricket and flexibility**
- **Increased strength and conditioning – potentially reducing injuries**

But they will not suit everyone and there are negatives particularly

- **Restrictions on players to maximise personal earnings**

**Just two clubs currently offer 12 month contracts – Gloucestershire and Lancashire.**

The allocation of winter time depends very much on the management style of the club.

It should be noted that the Burns/Crowe case v Leicestershire in 2002 set a precedent, that even if a player is on a 6 month contract he will still receive the benefits of continuous employment.

### Considerations

The survey established the following information with regard to decisions on 12 month playing contracts.



**60%** of cricketers have played abroad last winter.

**6%** of cricketers were at university last winter.

**45%** of cricketers worked in some capacity last winter.

More cricketers should be encouraged to fulfill cricketing educations abroad.  
A lifestyle in a foreign country is good for their cricket and maturity.

This should always be balanced against a proactive realistic approach to potential careers after cricket. Recent research has shown that cricketers planning parallel careers perform better (ECB/PCA Performance Lifestyle Advisers)

- 71% of players saw a Lifestyle Adviser in the last 12 months
- In 2007 the number figure was 60%

**Players should not be pressured into 12 month contracts. What may suit one player, may not suit another.  
The risks of losing top county players to ICL is real. How would the game replace them if a 12 month ban is enforced?  
More non-England qualified cricketers?**

## Recommendations

ECB work with PCA to form a new, flexible standard contract and make money available to recompense those who choose (or are chosen) to accept all year round deals.

'A 12 month or nothing' option by counties is not the answer to restrict players from ICL or un authorised cricket, because 45% would risk a ban.

## NON-ENGLAND QUALIFIED CRICKETERS

### Current situation

**The risk of more non-England qualified cricketers into the domestic game is great if top county players decide to go and take up ICL contracts and are subsequently banned for 12 months.**

- In 2007 there were 30 non-England qualified cricketers (excluding overseas players)
- In 2008 there are 62 non-England qualified cricketers (excluding overseas players)

### PCA Support Balanced Efforts to Encourage England Qualified Players

In light of recent comments and observations regarding the increased number and prominence of non-England qualified players in English domestic cricket, the Professional Cricketers' Association has surveyed its membership and found overwhelming support for efforts to encourage more England qualified players being employed and developed in the English game.

### The PCA note the following:

English cricket derives 85% of its revenue from the exploits of the England Team. A strong England Team is vital to the future welfare of our game and of every professional cricketer in England and Wales.

Despite substantial central funding from the ECB to the Counties, the pool from which the selectors may choose England players is diminishing, with fewer being employed and fewer on show in first team matches.

All measures to counter these trends to date appear to have been ineffective. Certainly the current level of incentive provided through performance related fee payments is not working. The ECB and the Counties must try and find effective solutions.

**Our survey shows, overwhelmingly, players believe that there should be a minimum of 8 English qualified cricketers per side per match, a stance we have held since a key 2003 AGM. There was no strong preference as to the number of 'overseas' players as opposed to EU qualified or "Kolpak" players – the key issue is whether the player is qualified to play for England or not.**

**14 Counties surveyed in favour of 8 England Qualified players per side per match. One county thought seven and three felt nine was right.**

The PCA acknowledge that good foreign players have a positive effect on English cricket and the development of young English cricketers. We also acknowledge that many great England players have come into the English game from overseas. Foreign players are, therefore, integral to English cricket, but the balance that should exist has been eroded to the point where the sheer number of foreign players is too high and potentially detrimental to the long term interests of English cricket.

Every first class player becomes a member of the PCA as soon as they are registered at ECB to play in England and Wales, so the foreign players are our members and are entitled to and will receive our full support and all our services whilst they are here – it is not the PCA that employs them and they, as individuals, cannot be blamed for taking advantage of the opportunities the Counties offer them.

## Recommendations

The ECB, the Counties, respective coaches and captains all need to carefully and responsibly take a unified approach to find a balanced situation. Possible areas to explore are:

- Increases in performance related payments
- Test European law
- Evaluate the threat of New Zealand and Australians who may soon become Kolpak players
- Hardening of qualification restrictions
- Evaluate County academies and their worth. Are they working?
- Put more time and resource into Club cricket structures – the next step before professional cricket. How effective is it at bringing players on?
- Big development and re structure of minor county cricket. What benefit does it give to the overall domestic structure?
- More thought and investment into creating better 2nd Eleven cricket in every aspect from fixtures to grounds and pitches

## Current status - June 17th 2008

### PLAYERS NOT QUALIFIED FOR ENGLAND

County	Qualified (Reg. 2 – EU citizens and 'Kolpak')	Unqualified (Reg 3 – 'Overseas Pros')
Derbyshire	5	1
Durham	6	1
Essex	2	1
Glamorgan	0	1
Gloucestershire	2	1
Hampshire	3	1
Kent	6	1
Lancashire	2	1
Leicestershire	6	1
Middlesex	3	1
Northamptonshire	5	1
Nottinghamshire	2	1
Somerset	6	1
Surrey	7	1
Sussex	2	1
Warwickshire	2	1
Worcestershire	1	1
Yorkshire	2	1
	62	18

Source ECB

## THE STRUCTURE

### IN A NEW DOMESTIC STRUCTURE SHOULD THERE BE THREE TOURNAMENTS?



- In 2007 67% said YES, so players' views have hardened in that time

### DO YOU STILL BELIEVE THAT THE RESPECTIVE DOMESTIC COMPETITIONS SHOULD MIRROR THEIR INTERNATIONAL FORMATS AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE?



## 'Blocks of cricket'

'Blocking' the season into different formats has some merit.

Four day cricket at the start of the season, when weather can be more sporadic and not conducive to one-day cricket, could mean that focus can be put entirely onto four day matches and the build up to test matches in June.

Two further blocks could follow for 50 over and Twenty20. There would be periods that allow for England players to be available more often especially a clean Twenty20 period. Major finals and the key championship climax would conclude in August and September.

## Benefits of 'Blocks'

- Playing the same cricket all together
- Easier to plan and prepare
- Remove back to back matches – a 4 day match followed by a one-day game
- Allowing for England players to be available for Twenty20 (EPL)
- Easy to follow for all
- Give each competition identity
- Potentially enhance commerciality at county level

The reality and uniqueness of the English summer is the variety of our weather. There is a possibility that 'blocking' could completely decimate one particular tournament due to a bad weather cycle and this was a key consideration.

- **There has been some talk of a three conference system for the County Championship, but 10 championship matches is too few, although play offs for the championship and for promotion and relegation could be incorporated.**
- **It would also be difficult to sell such a reduction of cricket to members**

## ENHANCED CHANGES TO THE STRUCTURE FOR 2008

### TOO MUCH CRICKET? 2007 Player views



**The existing Championship structure was supported by players with just a few small tweaks needed to bring it more into line with Test Cricket.**

**95% of players thought that a reduction from 104 to 96 overs a day would bring benefits to the game.**

This reduction in overs would bring the county championship closer to Test matches as well as bringing England into line with other Test playing nations.

This small change would generate the equivalent of four days reduced workload over the course of a season, whilst not affecting the actual number of playing days.

The change to shorter sessions would also ensure that the better bowlers were used for a higher proportion of the match. This will improve standards, intensity and competition.

It is necessary to consider the effect of the weather on our proposal for a reduction in overs. The players proposed that there should be provision to make up 30 minutes of play on each day or carried over to days two and three. This would help to offset any loss of overs due to the weather and give maximum opportunity for matches to reach a natural outcome.

**One of the issues consistently raised by players during discussions with the PCA was the desire to reduce back-to-back matches (4 days game followed immediately by one-day game).**

### Current situation

All of the above changes were recommended and adopted (other than back to back relief) this season along with a new regional format of 50 over cricket with International rules and regulations.

## FOUR DAY CRICKET

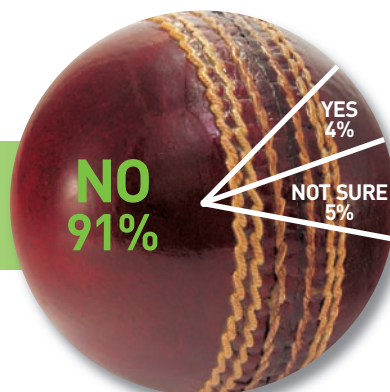
**93% of cricketers in 2007 said that the key objective of the County Championship was to produce Test cricketers.**

**IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU THAT TEST CRICKET MAINTAINS ITS CURRENT STATUS WITHIN INTERNATIONAL CRICKET?**



- **c50%** of money created in our game is generated by Test Cricket Source ECB
- **75%** of England players believe that a Test Championship needs to be included in any new FTP (Future Tours Programme)

**SHOULD TEST MATCHES BE REDUCED TO FOUR DAYS IN DURATION?**



These statistics clearly show the importance cricketers place on the highest form of our game. Four day cricket is obviously the format closest to Test matches.

“I never thought I would say this, but the standard and intensity of the cricket in the first division matches is what we have back home.

“I remember talking to Shane Warne (the Hampshire captain at the time) last season when we were going for promotion and he kept telling me how serious the standard is in division one. From an England point of view this is great. If young guys can crack it in this division then they will be ready for international cricket”

JUSTIN LANGER

## Current situation

The Championship is not a key commercial driver for the counties and the future of the competition is heavily dependent upon the annual ECB subsidy to the counties. It is therefore helpful to consider the County Championship primarily as a development ground for International Cricket, funded by Test cricket. This is in accordance with the ECB philosophy underpinning their strap line, "From playground to Test arena".

The only way of preparing players for Test matches is to have a county championship that closely mirrors the format of Test matches.

**Despite recent announcements of new monies players still favour sixteen 4-day games. Players are not calling to reduce the number of matches. Standards, intensity and integrity are at new high in the county championship. It is still the breeding ground for future international cricketers at all levels.**

**A 3 divisional structure was carefully considered but is deemed to be too few matches (10) and open to devastation from the English weather.**

The reduction to 96 overs has increased standards to new levels.

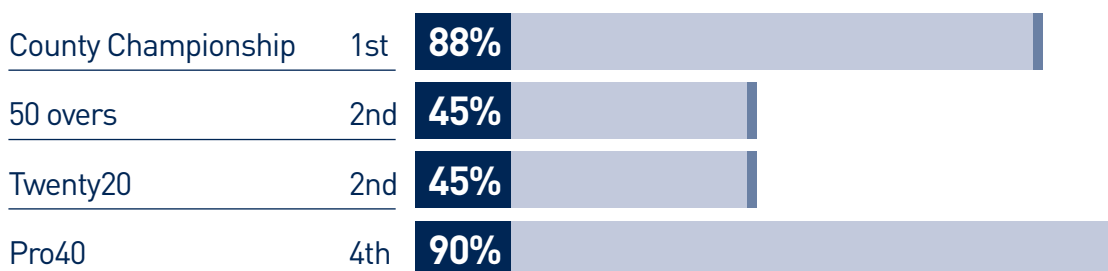
## What the players predicted

### 104 overs to 96 for the first three days of County Championship matches:

- It would bring first class cricket closer in line with Test Match cricket.
- Matches would more closely mirror conditions of Test cricket.
- Reduce chances of injury when players are tired in longer sessions.
- Keep cricketers fresher to perform at a higher level.
- Shorter sessions ensure better bowlers bowl more often throughout game – improving standards, intensity and competition.
- Members will see a higher standard of cricket.
- A focus on quality not quantity.
- Not so much a structural changes but rather a minor playing conditions change to enhance quality of cricket.
- A positive move by the game together – taking the game forward players concerns in a positive way.

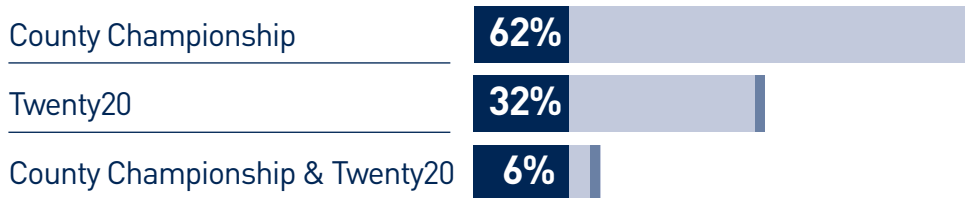
With the broadcasting rights not dependent on domestic championship cricket, to fully judge the impact of the new changes, the season needs to be reviewed at its conclusion.

### Q) RATE THE COMPETITIONS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE



## Post announcement of Stanford & Champion Leagues survey

### Q) PRE-SEASON SURVEY SAID YOU RATE THE CHAMPIONSHIP AS MOST IMPORTANT COMPETITION. WITH NEW MONIES INTO TWENTY20 WHICH DOMESTIC COMP IS MOST IMPORTANT NOW?



- A clear shift of 26% has occurred in player views since the announcements of Stanford and the Champions League.
- The championship is still viewed as the making of a player, but new monies into the Twenty20 format have directly influenced this shift.

## Conferences for Championship cricket

Whilst a 3 conference championship offers some merits and would allow a 12-15 match tournament, it is felt that after increasing standards in recent years, it would be a large backward step to begin a random or regional based 3 conference county championship. It doesn't reduce cricket enough to have any significant impact.

Standards are high in both divisions, but it is becoming widely recognised that division one has a greater depth. Cricket is now being likened to the tough Australian Shield cricket.

Randomly picking/pooling teams will destroy several years of work in getting the standards to the high levels that we see today.

Strong arguable reasons for adopting a conference system are yet to be put forward. Infact since 'Raising the standards' in 1997, the format has carried little favour.

It creates an asymmetrical format which would be complicated to follow for players and spectators and will lack competitive sporting integrity.

An asymmetrical structure could work in a one-day format but should not be considered for the premier 4 day competition which is highly regarded by the players. It is not a strong enough argument from counties to say that there is too much pressure to be in Division 1. If counties received less money for being in Division 2 then you may have sympathy with the argument. But counties have a duty to manage their budgets accordingly and develop home grown talent from the academy or club cricket structures.

## Recommendations

Increase prize for winning the County Championship. If the game values Test cricket, then this important breeding ground has to be protected as well.

£750,000 for winning Division 1

£250,000 for winning Division 2

**Maintain 16 4-day matches with new regulations** – 96 overs per day. The difference to the regulations has been overwhelmingly positive.

Promotion and relegation element is still very popular with players.

More research to a wider audience including the 'new generation' age group cricketers. A co-ordinated programme to gather feedback from academy cricketers, U12's and upwards. These are tomorrow's cricketers and to gather their thoughts now is a window on the future. Too often we jerk into reactionary change with last minute research.

Thought again needs to be given on how we can reduce back-to-back matches. There is consistent feedback that playing regional cricket in 50 and Twenty20 is monotonous by playing the same teams over and over. Find out what the spectators feel about this point.

## ONE DAY CRICKET – 40 & 50 OVERS

Last year players called for the removal of Pro40. It has no place in the international calendar and therefore no relevance to our domestic structure.

### Current situation

#### 90% of cricketers voted the Pro 40 the least important competition.

Reports back to date have been favourable to the change in 50 over format. ‘Small groups, more intensity, more matches having something on them’ were requests and suggestions players made last year.

The 50 over competition is probably played slightly too early in season but a much better format than the 2007 north and south structure. It should be noted again that a 2 divisional 50 over tournament with two groups of nine does not create intensive cricket throughout.

International regulations have been welcomed, however early season matches and damper wickets negate the tactical use of Powerplays.

There seems to be a train of thought that 40 over cricket is more commercially viable than 50 overs.

However, swapping the time of year that Pro40 and FPT are played would have tested that assumption. Quantitative public research done by the DSRG last season showed no favour between 40 or 50 over cricket. With 50 over cricket played at the least favourable time of year it would seem a pretty conclusive public message to back up the strong player opinions.

Pro40 obviously benefits from the best of the summer weather, school holidays and rides on the back of Twenty20 season.

Whatever the mood is for 50 over cricket in the light of new monies into Twenty20, it is an official international competition with a Champions Trophy and World Cup.

### Considerations

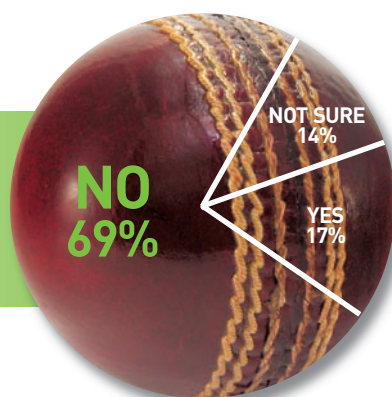
Until the time the game decides at ICC level the 50 format has no future, we have to play it domestically. Importantly we can help that process by ensuring we communicate and conduct appropriate research with spectators and all stakeholders.

**IS IT IMPORTANT THAT 50 OVERS ODI'S MAINTAIN THEIR CURRENT STATUS WITH INTERNATIONAL CRICKET?**

(Pre Stanford & Champions League)



**SHOULD ODI'S BE REDUCED TO 40 OVERS PER SIDE?**



### Recommendations

ICC international research into the future of the 50 over format.

Removal of Pro40 format.

Keep this years 50 over format (4 groups of 5) but give serious thought to drawing random groups instead of regional fixtures.

## TWENTY 20

### Current situation

It is inevitable that new monies into Twenty20 competitions will have lasting effects on our game.

Recent new research since Stanford announcements with players has already shown a link to changing priorities.

PCA played significant role in increasing Twenty20 to 10 games after player comments that the format could be enhanced with symmetry of competition.

- 73% feel that the large sums of money being offered in both ICL, IPL and Stanford will motivate the younger generation to hone their skills on Twenty20.

**It remains a fact that the overwhelming majority of cricketers will play all forms of cricket to develop their games. It is unlikely that Twenty20 alone can create the new generation on its own. You have to be good to play at the highest level and you do that by developing skills and improvisation at the highest levels.**

### Considerations

**Twenty20 specialists? There are one-day specialists in our game now and there has been for many years.**

**A game with a mixture of formats allows it to be that way. In fact there are cricketers, albeit few that hold just 'one-day' terms. Indeed there are some players who excel in Twenty20 now.**

Does this mean the increase in Twenty20 will create more and more Twenty20 specialists?

Only time will tell and continual close monitoring and research from players and spectators will be key.

An all season Twenty20 tournament certainly has merit but whether it is practically possible and financially viable is questionable.

Smaller regional groups work keeping intensity and maximising crowds.

Can counties maximise this period with potentially seven home matches in a short time span?

The Champions League creation, if not a mirage for most with ICL connections, is a positive move and has added increased incentive to the current Twenty20 structure this summer.

### Recommendations

Keep regional set up – it works, but explore viability of non regional Twenty20.

Ensure levels of Twenty20 and any potential plans for additional sides are reasonable to create an EPL.

Last year the PCA proposed moving Twenty20 back further into school holidays in July – consider again.

To create an EPL and allow England's internationals to play would make sense and therefore a clean window will need to be created.

Keeping a balance in the number of fixtures will be most important.

## CONCLUSION – ‘MONEY TALKS’

Many players feel that new changes and enhancements to the structure in 2007 have brought significant benefits to the game – enhancements that came by their recommendations. In fact, many players believe that we are not too far off an excellent structure.

In our conclusion to ‘Tougher Structures to Test County Players’ document last year, we talked about our game needing to move forward collectively.

The fact is that after many of the PCA recommendations/principles were adopted for this season 2008, we have seen less of an attitude for collaboration from the ECB.

After feeding views into the ECB’s Domestic Structure Review Group (DSRG), the player representative was removed from the group in December without explanation.

Important research (to this date) has not been shared with key stakeholders and new public research this season is being limited to Twenty20.

The findings of the research undertaken last season, both qualitative (key stakeholders – Players, CEO’s, Chairmen, Journalists, public focus groups in Leeds and London) and quantitative (public) did not bear out that 40 over cricket is preferred to 50 overs. As many have suggested, the PCA believes 50 overs would attract larger crowds if played in the current 40 over slots, especially due to school holidays, riding on the back of Twenty20 and better weather in that period for both day and floodlit matches.

The ICC and International Boards need to look at the FTP closely. Is test cricket dying? Why are crowds dwindling in certain countries?

Is it enough to publish ICC Test rankings in a rolling year on year fashion? What other tournament generating significant global revenue rolls on without creating a champion?

Just like in any sport, our domestic game, players and spectators buy into matches meaning something. The structures need to be better at Test level and the game needs to be marketed to reflect those needs.

The mood is for 50 over cricket in the light of new monies into Twenty20, it is an official international competition with a Champions Trophy and World Cup.

Until the time the game decides at ICC level the 50 format has no future, we have to play it domestically. Importantly we can help that process by ensuring we communicate and do appropriate research with spectators and all stakeholders.

The biggest question of all, is whether Twenty20 will take over the game of cricket in the future?

**It remains a fact that the overwhelming majority of cricketers will play all forms of cricket to develop their games. It is unlikely that Twenty20 alone can create the new generation on its own. You have to be good to play at the highest level and you do that by developing skills and improvisation against peers at the highest levels.**

Will Twenty20 have longevity and be a good public spectacle when 80 out of 120 balls bowled are yorkers? After early passages of play where wickets are sought with the new ball, players may become more and more intent on restricting sides by bowling into the ‘block hole’, resulting in fewer balls being hit into roaring crowds?

**We must use the increased revenues** generated by Twenty20 to invest in player retention and game development across all forms of the game.

90% of players see Test cricket as the pinnacle and it currently is responsible for the majority of revenues into English cricket. To protect its position it must feature the best players in the world and to prevent them from retiring early remuneration levels for Test matches must at least match those of Twenty20.

As with most things in life, the future will be about getting the balance right. Everything in moderation. We all have to play our part to ensure cricket's healthy future.

The ECB needs to increase monies into bonus pools in Test cricket to redress the balance and they must now do the same for the County Championship.

Encourage ICC to completely overhaul the Future Tours Programme as a matter of importance. The creation of Test tiers/divisions where the best sides play against each other over a 3 year cycle culminating in a Test champion. Breathe life and true meaning into Test cricket and each series from a player and fans perspective.

**Players overwhelmingly prioritised Test and championship cricket as the most important prior to new monies coming in and still do, but clearly the balance has shifted and it is purely down to money. The only way to protect these fundamental and pinnacle formats are to redress the balance with new financial incentives.**

A new FTP and marketing campaign can protect the longer versions of the game in the medium to long term and still grow the game globally.

There is no other sport that offers such a choice of formats of which all cricket lovers or new fans can enjoy.

## Headline Recommendations

- **Maintain the County Championship in its current format but with new financial incentives**
- **Leave 50 over cricket as it is but consider drawing groups randomly**
- **Create a new Twenty20 EPL (English Premier League) but with emphasis on balance and not overkill**
- **The removal of Pro40**

To disband the ECB DSRG, it should be replaced by the ECB cricket committee which has representation from every key stakeholder. The ECB cricket committee should then convene every 3 months and not 6 as it currently stands.

Adopt an annual, strategic research policy from age group cricketers (the game's future participants and spectators) to all consumers and stakeholders.

To work hand in hand with all international Boards and the BCCI to create a March IPL window and ensure an equitable outcome for all.

The PCA is committed to working with the key stakeholders to ensure improvement both on the field and off it commercially. The players were pivotal in buying into Twenty20 cricket in 2003 after excellent communication and process from ECB.

At such an important time in cricket's history, if the game and the key stakeholders fail to unite in views then we place our great game and English cricket in particular in jeopardy.

Strong leadership from ECB should not mean moving forward without consultation from these stakeholders.

We must do our best to preserve the rich heritage whilst embracing the new opportunities offered to the game. The players have done this in the past and in this document demonstrate to their willingness to do it again.



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