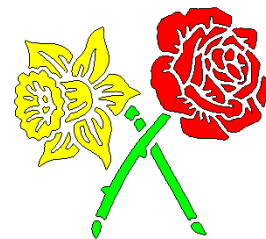


In Conversation



A Publication of the League Cricket Conference

Issue 4 February 2017

The Annual General Meeting and Preparing for 2017

The Annual General Meeting is to be held at Nantwich Cricket Club on Saturday 11th March. Full details of this event will be circulated to the membership later in February. Conference's committee is very much aware that there has not been a meeting for some considerable time and members might be asking themselves why we have not met for so long. The committee, however, has not been inactive but has always felt that it is a bit of an imposition to expect members to undertake

what, in many cases, is a long journey to attend a meeting whose content makes it questionable whether or not the journey was worthwhile. The closed season has seen much action in the approach to the recreational game and it is to be hoped that this year's annual general meeting will attract more members than usual as we try to put all these matters together. The League Cricket Conference continues to be a forum in which leagues can debate all matters which affect leagues, not just the top flight

premier leagues, but all leagues which provide a setting for players to enjoy this magnificent game to its fullest.

So why should you bother this year?

Amongst it, from the other more mundane matters on the agenda, will be the Neil Edwards Memorial Awards, managed migration (a particularly important issue this year) and what's new in play-cricket which matters are described in more detail herein.

The Neil Edwards Memorial Awards



For the last 12 months the LCC executive has been considering ways that the amazing

contribution made by Neil Edwards to Conference during his lifetime might properly be recognised.

Of the several suggestions put forward we were most enthused by the idea of awards recognising the best league cricketers from around the country, and it has now been agreed that there should be five LCC league cricketers of the year awards made – in some ways mirroring the five Wisden players announced each year in the professional game. The players which the LCC will consider will, however, not be from overseas or contracted to a first class county.

The committee has, therefore, sought nominations from the member leagues for the inaugural awards covering the 2016 season. The five award winners will be announced at the end of February and invited to attend a special luncheon and presentation prior to the Annual General Meeting of Conference.

An overall 'Cricketer of the Year' will then be announced at the end of those presentations.

It is hoped and anticipated that this will become an annual event celebrating the very best league players from around the country.

Managed Migration – Is Your League Managing?

The recent notifications from the ECB about this complex topic have produced a spate of enquiries from around the country and a presentation on this topic will be given at the AGM.

Emanating from discussions between the Home Office, ECB and one or two Premier Leagues, guidance for leagues and clubs has been provided by the ECB to assist with some

of the typical questions asked regarding players arriving in the UK from outside the EEA, with clarification on the definitions of what constitutes a professional or amateur player together with a re-emphasising of the conditions attaching to the main types of visas that currently allow the playing of amateur cricket.

Please note that whilst LCC is prepared to give general advice to try and help with queries, neither ourselves or the ECB are registered to give specific advice and it remains the responsibility of each club to ensure they adhere to all rules and regulations.

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Play-cricket – what’s new for the 2017 season?

Upgrades to play-cricket continue apace with a series of improvements to the system due to be implemented before the start of the season. Some of these updates are as follow:-

Captains’ and umpires’ reports

Set up online form for captains and umpires to submit reports on grounds and pitches, umpires and fair play to their league. Includes alerts to league for sub-standard marks, reminders to clubs for overdue reports, and the ability to export data to create your own reports.

Automatic calculation of bonus points

League defined parameters that will calculate bonus points based on scores when they are

input. Ability for league administrators to adjust in the case of problems

Validation of and reporting on incomplete and inaccurate scorecards for league and club administrators

Problems reported direct to club and league sites. No need for administrators to visually check through every scorecard. Leagues can decide which issues it wants highlighted.

Scoring app and live scores

Available for Apple and Android on phones and tablets initially. Score the game, display live scores for your members and supporters, and upload results and scorecards straight to play-cricket.

Switch easily to another device if battery problems or if each side scoring one innings.

Club contact management for leagues

Seamlessly collect and manage contacts for your clubs from the league site. No need for league officials to maintain individual lists – all work from the same database. Clubs make updates from their own play-cricket sites.

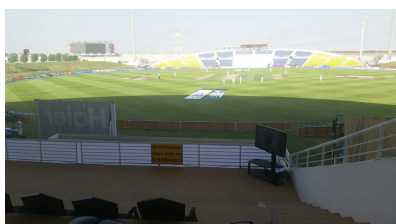
Fixtures

An improved fixture generation and validation is being provided.

There will be a more detailed presentation at the AGM with Chris Higginbottom on hand to answer any queries.

Cross Country

Late February is upon us and with spring beckoning everyone’s thoughts are, inevitably, turning to the 2017 season which is now just a few weeks away. But, over the ever increasingly busy winter months there has been plenty happening across the metropolises and shires of this country, so why not take a few minutes to read about some of the things happening, not only in your neck of the woods, but further afield. It may be news to some but there has been some English league cricket played over the last three months with Yorkshire Cricket’s “Race to Abu Dhabi” reaching a magnificent conclusion in the UAE last October.



The historic first season of Yorkshire Premier League cricket could not have had a better climax than the September play-offs provided with the tone being well and truly set in two nail biting semi-finals.

The ‘South’ champions Wakefield Thornes beat the ‘North’ title winners Harrogate by three wickets at Scarborough whilst the Bradford League champions Pudsey St. Lawrence just edged past the North Yorkshire & South Durham’s top Yorkshire side Great Ayton by the slender margin of 5 runs at Headingley.



The final itself was played in October in the grand surroundings of the Sheik Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi.

With temperatures peaking at 36°C in the day/nighter, Wakefield Thornes upset the odds once more with a 39 run win over St. Lawrence, the game marked by two outstanding centuries.

David Toft proved to be the Thorne in Pudsey’s side as his team racked up a formidable 296 and, despite a battling 112 from Mark Robertshaw, his side were eventually dismissed for 257.

It was a bonus for the players that in addition to the 34 supporters on the official trip, others flew in from the UK in the 24 hours before the game and more travelled up from Dubai, while more than 12,000 people worldwide viewed the game live thanks to a video stream.

Airedale And Wharfedale

League players from opposite ends of the age spectra have received international recognition since the end of the season. Highly promising 17 year old batsman Harry Brook from Burley in Wharfedale has been called up for the England Under 19 training camp in Dubai this winter having made his debut for Yorkshire against Pakistan A last June. Meanwhile, left arm spin bowler Steve Booth of Collingham (Steve also

played for Somerset between 1983 and 1985 taking 87 wickets) and Steve Wales from North Leeds have been selected for the England Over 50s tour of South Africa in the spring.



The Bassetlaw & District
Cricket League

Founded 1904

The league in 2017 will comprise 7 divisions of 12 teams and 1 division of 11 teams. The

league’s management committee, like so many others across the country, is concerned with the growing number of fixtures being defaulted (40 in 2016) and the demise of a number of club’s third and fourth teams. The success of the ECB’s national campaign “Get the Game On” is crucial for the long term future of the game.

Birmingham Premier

Shrewsbury, who have won the premier league title twice in the last four years, will have a new skipper at the helm as they seek to improve on

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their third place finish of 2016. Young Herefordshire minor counties batsman Ben Stebbings will take over from Rob Foster. The new man in charge is in his second season at London Road having previously played first class cricket for Oxford MCCU. Another Shropshire based side, Oswestry, has appointed one of the youngest captains in its history with Robbie Clarke, a 22 year old Swansea university student. His brother is Worcestershire and England Lions batsman Joe Clarke.

Bolton

If you are wandering around Bolton way this summer, expect to see some changes in player personnel. A major alteration passed by the clubs at the AGM will now allow clubs who employ a professional either UK based or from overseas to field an overseas amateur as well. The rule change is predicated on the basis of raising the standard of the game. The clubs have also voted for changes to their cup competitions. 'The Peter Stafford Trophy' changes to a 50 overs-a-side from 40 overs, in line with Hamer Cup. However, to achieve a diversity between the two prestige competitions, the latter will see a limitation of 10 overs per bowler.

There has also been a "sexing up" of the hugely popular Twenty-20 competition with each entrant club having a minimum of three homes games, the early stages being regionalised to boost crowd attendance and match day revenues. Meanwhile, 2016 champions Farnworth Social Circle won this winter's the Lancashire Cricket Board indoor cricket trophy.

Bradford

Significant rule changes were agreed at the recent AGM held at Cleckheaton. There is a change to the bonus points system which enables the teams who bowl the opposition out cheaply to gain the maximum 20 points. This will see the side batting second gain up to a maximum 5 points but will lose 1 point for every two wickets that they lose in the run chase. Contiguous is the abolition of the toss, following its "successful" introduction in first class cricket. The away team will have the choice to bowl first. Mathematicians in the Bradford area will have extra work as the league introduces Duckworth Lewis calculations for rain affected games - Good Luck!

In other news, the 2017 champions will play, in the semi finals, the Yorkshire Premier League North champions at the delightful Marine Parade Ground Scarborough (surely the best ground to watch first class cricket apart from Lords) in the 'Race to Headingley'. Last year the league's champions,, Pudsey St Lawrence, made it to the final.

Bristol & District

Frenchay (a ground visited by the League Cricket Conference in 2005), which was in the top flight of the West of England Premier League as recently as 2005, will start 2017 back in the Bristol and District League. One of the

oldest clubs in Bristol (formed in 1846) won the senior division of the Bristol & District League in 1997 and will hope twenty years on that they keep repeat this feat in to make an immediate return to the West of England competition. Ironically, Frenchay start the season with a home game against Portishead which was also relegated at the end of last season.

Cheshire County



There were celebrations at Nantwich when Haseeb Hameed made his Test Debut this winter, for the Lancashire youngster nicknamed "Baby Boycott" played six games for The Dabbers in 2014. Nantwich have also been busy in the transfer market this winter as they look to avoid another season fighting relegation. Cheshire Minor County's all-rounder Henry Dobson moves from Tattenhall. Another player starting out on a first class cricket career is Brook Guest of Sale who has been awarded a contract with the Red Rose County. A two year contract with Lancashire has been awarded to Matthew Parkinson who has played for Cheshire side Urmston, the player in 2016 became the first Lancashire player in five seasons to take 5 wickets in an innings on debut. A player who has played first class cricket for both Natal and Gloucestershire, Grant Hodnett, has signed for Timperley.

Cheshire

Exploratory talks have taken place between the Cheshire Cricket League and the Cheshire Cricket Alliance in respect of a possible merger. At the time of going to press, no final decision had been taken by either league.



The league, which adopted a new logo on 1st November 2016, will have 150 teams competing across 13 divisions. In a step which other leagues may wish to follow, at Tier 3, the league has introduced five sections to minimise travelling and encourage greater participation. The names given to each section are emblematic of the many splendours of Poldark Country - Atlantic, Falmouth, Central, Gannell and Tamar. In other news the league's long serving chairman, Vic Hassell, has decided to stand down.

Penzance has issued an open letter calling on the removal of a requirement that clubs can field no more than one player who has played first class cricket. The ambitious West Cornwall club who have Greg Smith the former Essex and Derbyshire Pro as Director of Cricket argue that this limits the best players from moving to the county.

Derbyshire

The league witnessed a number of changes to rules at its November 2016 AGM. In an attempt increase player participation, the deadline to

register a new player has been extended to 2100 hours on the Friday before the game on a Saturday. Division 8 will now be 40 overs a side. In the 50 over competition, clubs voted for the removal of inner circle fielding restrictions. The league will also play a role in the county club's new development player pathway under newly appointed former Lancashire and Northamptonshire pro Mal Loye. The league will be asked to identify potential young budding cricketers for the future. And, talking of young budding cricketers, Eckington's Johan Davel won the Player of the Year award for 2016 and a prize of £750.00.

Derbyshire & Cheshire



The league has adopted a new approach for sides failing to field a full team or defaulting a fixture. Out go financial penalties and in comes point deductions. A point will be deducted per player not playing. Clubs have also agreed a restructuring for 2018 which will see three 1st XI and three 2nd XI divisions. Bowlers will be subject to a maximum of 12 overs each.

Devon



There will be at least two new skippers in the premier league in 2017. North Devon has appointed Ed Yeo, who blasted a superb 141 off just 97 balls in the premier league encounter with Exmouth last summer. He replaces Barney Huxtable who is now at Cardiff University, the latter intends playing for Panteg in the South Wales premier. Heathcote which plays in the picturesque grounds of the National Trust property at Knightshayes (well worth a visit if you are in the Tiverton area) has chosen Peter Randerson as their new captain. Devon is also looking to re-structure with a proposed "All Through League" below a countywide top three divisions.

Durham

Tudhoe, relegated from the North East Premier League at the end of the 2016 season, has issued a statement of intent of immediate promotion with the news that it has signed South Africa's South West District fast bowler Glenton Stuurman. He featured in the South Nottinghamshire League for Balderton where he took 43 wickets, including two 'seven-fors' against Long Eaton.

The mining village of Tudhoe, which is on the outskirts of Spennymoor, was last in the Durham League in 2014. The club's history dates back to 1866.

Division 1 club Philadelphia has relaid its entire square during the winter and installed drains under the playing surface thanks, in part, to a grant of £62,000 from Sports England.

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East Sussex

This summer will see the league at 12 divisions in strength. A change in playing regulations agreed in the autumn of 2016 will see the second half of the season played on a limited overs format.



The Essex League will be piloting a number of changes in playing conditions in 2017. All 1st, 2nd and 3rd team 95 over timed games will see the last hour commence 10 minutes later. 1st XI 120 over games will now start at 11am. In an attempt to encourage greater levels of player participation at the lower levels, bowlers will be unable to bowl more than one fifth of the total overs in 3rd and 4th XIs whilst the latter will be restricted to 40 overs per side. As they say "The Only Way Is Essex" it will be interesting to see the player responses to this pilot.

Gloucestershire County

The best run leagues are those which operate a full meaningful consultation with their member clubs. This is the case with the Gloucestershire county who have wisely this winter avoided precipitous rule changes but instead thrown open to the widest consultation proposals to increase batting bonus points and leg side wides. The league has also, at local level, acted upon the ECB campaign 'Get The Game On' by subsidising and organising the bulk purchase of flat sheet covers for its member clubs, thereby enabling more matches to be played despite rain.



2016 champions Egerton has been quick off the blocks in its winter recruitment by the signing of top order batsman Callum Parkinson from Cheshire County league club Urmston. The player has also signed a professional contract with Leicestershire. Egerton has also signed as its 2017 overseas pro Sri Lankan Mahela Udawette. The 30 year old left handed batsman and right arm off break bowler has played both one day and Twenty-20 internationals for his country. Egerton has also become the first club in its area to set up a junior cricket academy as the Bolton based outfit look to build on the local talent in the area. Meanwhile runners-up Prestwich have renewed the contract of professional Marty Walters for 2017. The league will also operate Duckworth Lewis for rain affected games this summer in the premier and divisions 1, 2 and 3. The league is also looking to expand its Sunday competition. A meeting of clubs was held in November 2016 to consider various options such as smaller divisions, regionalisation, splitting of divisions between clubs who wish to use Sunday cricket for junior development and others who seek

competitive cricket. As at 30th November, 49 teams had enrolled.



The prospect of league games being played with coloured clothing and white or pink balls has moved a step closer after a decision taken by the management committee to set up an evaluation sub-committee to report to the 2017 AGM. This follows the outcome of a survey of member clubs where a majority signified agreement in principle. Proposals will be put forward to the 2017 AGM which, if passed by a two thirds majority, could see coloured clothing in the home counties by the start of 2018 season. Finchamstead, formed in 1857, having won the league title for the first time in its history in 2016 enjoyed further recognition in December when their overseas star of 2015, Lochie Ferguson, made his debut for the New Zealand Black Caps against Australia in an ODI at the Sydney cricket ground. To boot, the fast bowler secured the prize wicket of Aussie opener David Warner. There was also good news for 2016 runners-up Henley with the selection of Euan Woods to the young England Lions tour over the winter which included a three week training camp in Dubai in December.



The big news is the signing of West Indian test batsman Devon Smith by Scholes as they look to recapture the league title which they last won in 2015. The 35 year old Grenadian played 38 Tests with a top score of 104 against England in 2004. He was the West Indies' leading run scorer in the 2011 World Cup.

Moves to reduce the number of sides in the top flight from 14 to 12 were shown the red card by clubs at the recent AGM. Such a decision is consistent with the ECB campaign "Get The Game On" and the clubs reluctance to see a reduction in revenue streams. The league have also welcomed six former Central Yorkshire league clubs into their fold, Holmbridge, Cartworth Moor, Egerton and Dalton, Almondburians, Nortonthorpe and Flockton.

Kent

Will Hartley complete three successive premier league titles in 2017? This is a question that many people are asking in the garden of England. Most clubs experience "their ups and downs", but one club clearly 'on the Up' is Holmsdale. The Sevenoaks based club will take up its position in the premier league in 2017 following three successive promotions, a quite incredible feat if you consider the strength of Kent club cricket. In 2013 the Montreal Park side was languishing near the foot of division 3. The last time Holmsdale were in the top flight of Kent cricket was in 1998 when it suffered a double relegation. One Kent club who must know what that feels like is Folkestone,

relegated from the premier at the end of 2015 they were relegated from Division 1 last summer.

Lancashire

The first stage of the league's proposed expansion comes to fruition in 2017 with the addition of three clubs to its ranks, Clitheroe and Great Harwood from the Ribblesdale League and Darwen via the Northern League. Albeit its aim is to have 24 clubs, new applications for membership close on 28th February 2017, the league has made clear (other leagues may wish to take note) that it does not wish to take clubs which would as a result place other leagues in a position where they could not function. One of these new clubs, Clitheroe, have made a statement of intent by the signing of Pakistani test batsman Fawad Alam. The player is a member of a select group who have scored a century on test debut – 168 v Sri Lanka. This is one of his 25 first class hundreds. There will be case of brotherly rivalry in 2017 among the pros - Kelly Smuts, who became the first player in South African first class cricket to score a century and take 13 wickets in a match, joins Todmorden whilst Jon-Jon Smuts, an opening batsman with Eastern Province is due to play at Enfield.



MI Dental
Liverpool & District
Cricket Competition



Colwyn Bay CC has looked to avoid the infamous second season syndrome in the top flight by making a number of important signings. Seam bowler Keiron New moves from neighbouring Prestatyn having taken 55 wickets in 2016 whilst all rounder Will Higginson arrives from Northop Hall. The Welsh side has also been boosted by the return to the club of ex rugby league professional Pat Leach who has agreed to travel from his Cardiff home to fulfil a number of games.

Both Colwyn Bay and Southport & Birkdale will be hosting 1st class cricket again this year with Glamorgan and Lancashire respectively.

Southport & Birkdale having returned to the top flight has recruited Tasmanian batsman Macalister Wright. Near neighbours Southport Trinity has also been in the market for a top flight Aussie, wicketkeeper/batsman Haydon McCrae having agreed to a move to The Rookery. There he will be joined by new recruits Davy Smith from Northern CC and Wim Van Der Wal.

The wonderfully named Prescott Odyssey makes its debut in the Competition, following promotion from the Southport and District League with Mark Duncan as its new skipper.

Mansfield

Shirebrook will start the season knowing that for the first time it has a degree of security in terms of the use of its home ground. After many years of negotiation, the club has secured a long joint venture lease of the ground with the local authority which will see it becoming a seven day

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a week sporting centre for use by local schools in addition to the club.

The Marches

The league welcomes two new clubs to its ranks, Ross on Wye and Cleobury Mortimer. Both clubs were previously members of the Worcestershire County League. The Clubs will be keen to end the domination of Garnons, Goodrich and Luctonians who have taken it in turns to win the title - this in an area where, in medieval times, it was dominated by the famous Marches Lords, many of whom were there to keep the Welsh Out! Fortunately, the modern day Marches league takes a more welcoming view of Welsh sides!



The Championship will in 2017 celebrate its 25th Anniversary. The strength of the competition is borne out by the fact 14 different sides have won the title in the 24 seasons since formation.

Middlesex County

Finchley, one of the powerhouses of Middlesex cricket over the years, has returned to the highest level. They must hope for a repeat of 1977 when they went the whole season unbeaten in the top flight.

Brondesbury join Finchley as the other side promoted to the top division.

Northern



Local media have reported that the league officials have been in discussion with their counterparts in the Palace Shield for a possible merger to take effect in 2018. This would result in a new competition spanning the areas of North Lancashire and Cumbria. Palace Shield clubs will be asked to vote on the proposal. One issue may be the extra travel with Northern already boasting clubs at Barrow and Penrith.

Netherfield have secured the services of Daniel Ingram for another season, the overseas amateur was the club's leading wicket taker with 38 scalps in 2016.

North Somerset

41 teams, spread across four divisions, will compete in the Sunday league in 2017. The bottom division comprises 15 sides each playing the other once, whereas in all other Divisions the customary home and away fixture prevails.

North Staffordshire & South Cheshire

Clubs have voted to allow substitute professional players to be recruited when their first choice is unavailable or injured. The change applies in the top four divisions, subject to a caveat that the player must not have played for another club in the competition in the same season. A limitation on the number of overs to be bowled by any one bowler was also passed.

This will result in a bowler being able to bowl no more than one third of all the overs.

Sandbach have joined the league at first and second team levels.

Hem Heath has re-signed Pakistani test bowler Bilawal Bhatti having previously played in 2013 and 2015. He is reputedly the fastest bowler in the league.

North Staffordshire And District Ken Lightfoot Phoenix 15

The competition, at the time of writing, was accepting applications for 2017. In the years that this unique tournament has taken place, over £13,000 has been raised for local charities ensuring that cricket provides a lasting legacy. The competition is to be commended.

North Yorkshire & South Durham



Following the completion of a two year restructuring programme, the league, in its 125th anniversary year, will have five Saturday divisions with 12 teams in each with a two up two down promotion and relegation system in place. Competition at all levels is certain to be the most intense it has ever been.

Hartlepool thought that it had pulled off a major coup by signing five times NEPL player of the year Richard Waite from Chester-le-Street but Hong Kong came calling and the player/coach is now to take up a two year posting as the national women's team coach. He follows a southern hemisphere path trodden by another North Eastern cricketer, Ian West. The former Great Ayton player was recently coach to the Samoan Women's national side and took it to gold medal success in the 2015 Pacific Games – the country's first ever cricketing medal!

'Pools' have moved quickly to fill the void left by Waite's departure, signing Sri Lankan Harsha Vithana who has played in the NE previously at South Hetton. Meanwhile, fit again Stokesley player James Weighell, a born and bred Yorkshireman, has secured a two-year deal with Durham. Weighell hit the headlines in 2016 with a County Championship return of 9 for 130 at Edgbaston before injury ruined a large portion of the remainder of the young quicky's season.

Northumberland

2016 champions, Tillside, has been accepted into the Northumberland and Tyneside Senior League. Two new clubs due to make their bow in the top flight are Stobswold Welfare and Cramlington.

Nottinghamshire

Welbeck who finished in eleventh place have received a reprieve from relegation following the decision of Clifton to withdraw from the league. The north Nottinghamshire club, which boasts among its ranks England fast bowler Jake Ball, has been faced with a move to the Bassetlaw League.

In other news, Will Butler has stepped down as captain of Cuckney after 10 years in the role and which has included leading the side to three titles in the last five seasons.

At its AGM, the premier league clubs voted for a number of rule changes which included bowlers being limited to 12 overs instead of 15 and a free hit after a no ball. The league umpires, in addition to learning the somewhat silly signal for a free hit, will also need to brush up on their counting skills as new power play rules limit the number of fielders outside the circle at various stages during the game. Only two fielders can be outside in the first 10 overs, increasing to four for the next 30 and five for the final ten.

Meanwhile Jake Libby of Hucknall picked up the player of the year award.

Pembroke League

Club cricket is not just all about the budding young stars of tomorrow, it also offers the long terms stalwarts of the game the chance of greater recognition with the growth in seniors cricket across the 38 county boards.

Two long serving players in the Pembroke League have enjoyed their recent times playing for Wales senior sides. Take Neal Williams, Cressely 2nd team batsman/wicket keeper, who, in representing Wales Over 50s, hit 105 against Wiltshire in 2016. 75 year old Nick Evans who is playing for Narbeth 2nds represented Wales Over 60s last term.

Pennine



2016 champions Walsden has signed, as its professional for 2017, Umesh Karunaratne. Perhaps the most eye catching signing has been Shaw's recruitment of ex England test and one day International Sajid Mahmood.

The South African Dolphins left hand batsman and slow left arm bowler Senuran Muthusamy will return for a second season at Greenfield. Ashton look again to have a fearsome bowling attack with the return of Sri Lankan Chanii Edirisinghe who took 38 wickets at under 9runs each last term whilst their young local fast bowler, Brad Woolley, with 50 wickets last summer, has this winter been playing grade cricket in Australia.

Refan Rafique will make it six seasons as pro at Glodwick, having amassed 592 runs and taken 35 wickets last summer. The most sarcastic tweet of the year award must go to the person who on the 22nd September 2016 tweeted on the league's web site "the Middleton committee have approved a new club badge" - above the tweet is a picture of a wooden spoon! The club who has hosted the League Cricket Conference AGMs for many years found themselves bottom of the Premier League.

Ribblesdale

The league will operate under an interesting structure in 2017 and one which other leagues

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may wish to consider. There will be two divisions of seven teams each. Each side in one division plays the others twice and then plays one game against each of the seven sides in the other division. Each side will then play two additional games against clubs in the other section to provide a 21 game season. There has also been talk of a possible link with the Lancashire League whereby, from 2019, Ribblesdale becomes a feeder. In other news, Cumberland minor counties player Matthew Walker has agreed to join Read, whilst former Haslingden junior Matt Griffin is the new pro at Baxenden.

Shropshire

Worsfield and Whitchurch, which were both relegated from the Birmingham premier league last season, are replaced by Sentinel who move up from the Shropshire league. Joining the top flight from the second division will be Newton and Market Drayton.

All this will result in a total of 122 sides playing in eight Saturday and two Sunday divisions.

Somerset Sunday

The league goes from strength to strength with an extra division added for the 2017 season. New members to the league seeking a Sunday outlet for their players are Shapwick and Polden, Stogumber and Taunton. One fascinating issue will be to see how newly promoted Bagborough will fare having won all their games in Division B last term.

A twenty over competition competed in by a number of Somerset Sunday clubs, the Baker Cup is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year.



Matt Metcalfe of Lymington won for the fourth time in seven seasons the league's Bowler of the Year award. The opening bowler's haul of 40 wickets for the 2016 season included 7 for 47 against eventual champions Havant. The latter's Ben Walker picked up the Batsman of the Year award with 739 runs. Australian born Fraser Hay of Portsmouth has secured a contract with Hampshire after a season for the premier league side which yielded 664 runs at an average of 47 together with 26 wickets costing less than 19 apiece.

Like the neighbouring Sussex League, the Southern League has regionalised its Divisions 5 and 6 in direct response to the ECB's Campaign 'Get The Game On'.

South Nottinghamshire

The recent cricketing experience of Clifton Village first team should be a lesson for all cricket clubs. In 2011 the club which plays its home games on the Nottingham Trent University Campus Site were winning for the third successive year the Nottinghamshire Premier League title. In an open letter issued in the Autumn of 2016 season the club wrote that it was no longer prepared to fund "a team of imported paid players". It decided therefore to

resign its first team from the Nottinghamshire Premier League. The first team will now take over the position of the club's second team in Division B of the South Nottinghamshire League with the second team starting a new life in Division H.

Such is the stark reality of top level recreational cricket where 'King Cash' appears to rule. That Clifton Village took the brave decision and the South Nottinghamshire League were there to offer the club, which includes among its former players ex-England and Nottinghamshire opening bowler Harold Butler, is to be commended.

Southport & District

Sutton St Helens which was relegated from the Liverpool Competition at the end of the 2016 season will be keen to make it a one season stay in the Southport & District league. However, it will have experienced playing in the Southport area having, until 2010, been members of the Merseyside and Southport Cricket Alliance. It will know that it will not be easy as other clubs who have dropped down the pyramid structure have taken a number of years to recover.

Staffordshire Club Championship

Milford Hall which completed the league and cup double in 2016 has been accepted by the Birmingham League where it will start life in Division 3. Without any Staffordshire club exiting the Birmingham League, the ten clubs which will make up the Club Championship in 2017 will have extra incentive to follow in the footsteps of Milford Hall. 88 teams will make up the Championship competing over 7 Divisions - there is no separation of 2nd, 3rd and 4th teams as, refreshingly, each being allowed to flourish.

Stone & District

This Sunday competition will hope for another good season, the sides all looking to prevent Little Stoke repeating its 2016 success.

Surrey Championship

The pavilion at Guildford is having a massive refurbishment. Built in 1938, the Woodbridge Road ground, which hosts Surrey for a four day game each year, will be enhanced with larger dressing rooms, a lift, modernised function room, a viewing balcony and a second floor with external seating. Neighbouring Camberley, newly promoted to the second tier of the Championship, has recruited South African leg spinner Warren Ekstaal who plays his club cricket for St Augustine - the late Basil D'Oliveira's old club.

Old Hamptonians (made up of former pupils from Hampton Grammar School) have secured international recognition with the call up of Julian Poulter to the England over 50s tour of South Africa in March 2017.

Sussex Premier

A new structure this season will allow all teams to find their own level rather than divisions being based on 1st, 2nd and 3rd teams. Divisions 5 and 6 are to be regionalised in order to

minimise travelling and thus encourage more player participation in line with ECB's "Get the Game On" initiative.

Roffey will be looking to come out top again for a fourth consecutive year whilst Preston Nomads will be looking for its tenth title.

Guernsey Samians from the Channel Islands will be playing its second season in the league. The Samians play each side once during the season and its final position is factored by an adjustment of bonus points.

The umpiring panel will welcome its first woman member for 16 years when Scottish born Fiona Richards dons the white coat.



Wilson Carlisle has stood down from the Thames Valley management committee after 24 years unstinting service.

The league is working with other local leagues to encourage greater participation levels within clubs. This saw the chairman of the Berkshire league address the Thames Valley league's recent AGM as the two leagues explore ways of improving the pathway for clubs in the Royal County.

The League has also reported phenomenal levels of "traffic" using its impressive web site - for the first 327 days of 2016 there were over 275,000 visits.

West Of England

Bath, often seen as the nursery for nurturing young first class cricketers of the future, has lived up to its reputation following its 19 year old George Hankins signing an extended three season contract with Gloucestershire. The youngster hit his maiden first class century for "the Glosters" against Northamptonshire in September.

Premier 1 club Potterne has had double cause to cheer. Its all-rounder Ed Young has been chosen as captain of Wiltshire for 2017 in addition to being chosen in the MCC team to tour Namibia this winter.

The Wiltshire Side has also had two players, Olly Johnson and Luke De Sousa, selected for the inaugural Wiltshire 2nd winter training programme. The new Minor County second team replaces the County Academy.

Chew Magna's Iain Locke has been called up to the Somerset Over 60s winter training at the Taunton county ground.

Worcestershire Saturday

In Edward Elgar county, 24 year old Jake Young has been appointed captain of Droitwich Spa who finished ninth in 2016. The young leg spinner has previously played for Evesham. The Spa will face in 2017 Eastnor who were relegated from the Birmingham Premier League pyramid at the end of the 2016 season.

Eastnor, with its new pavilion, will be keen to make an immediate return.

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Barnsley will change its name for the first time in 150 years as a result of a merger with Woolleys Miners Welfare. Barnsley, synonymous with such cricketing greats as Geoff Boycott, Darren Gough and Harold "Dickie" Bird, will now be known as Barnsley Woolley Miners Welfare. First and second teams will continue to play at Shaw Lane

(League Cricket Conference visited the ground in September 2011) with third and fourth teams and the junior sides playing at the Woolley Colliery ground. The club will run five league sides on a Saturday.



York has bolstered its ranks with a player who won a premier league champions medal in 2016. Australian Kyle Brockley, who last year was

part of the Sidmouth team that triumphed in Devon Premier League, has agreed a move to "the Minstermen". The opening bowler and middle order batsman has wintered in Sydney Grade Cricket for Sutherland. York will also be defending its Black Sheep Championship Trophy, having beaten Pudsey St Lawrence in the final in September 2016, Yorkshire Pro Jack Leaning scoring a century.

One Foot In The Archives – 40 Years Ago - League Cricket In 1977

1977 was the year of the Queen's Silver Jubilee. It was also the year that the leading punk rock group the Sex Pistols had its own take on the music "God Save The Queen". Its pop record was banned by a number of radio stations which no doubt only stimulated its sales! The pop group "Queen" included in its album "News of the World" the iconic track "We Are The Champions".

So who were the Champions in league cricket in 1977?

The Queen is said to have a blood line from the Tudor King Henry VII, so let us start in "Red Rose Country". Enfield were the Lancashire League champions winning by just one point from Accrington. Enfield's success lay in the prowess of Indian test cricketer S Madan Lal who scored 726 runs and took 82 wickets.

The Lancashire public also saw the arrival of "The Big Bird" - Joel Garner (eventually becoming one of Somerset's favourite adopted sons) was starting off a career which saw him take 105 wickets at a cost of under 9 apiece to lead Littleborough to the Central Lancashire League. Another West Indian great, coming toward the end of his playing career, Sonny Ramadhin (born 1st May 1929) took 120 wickets for Delph who won the Saddleworth League title.

Moving west, Ormskirk, for the second year running, won the Liverpool & District Competition. The mighty Os players had the 1977 Hot Chocolate number 1 hit entitled "You Win Again" to sing in the showers.

February 1977 saw the end of the Lancashire inspired Wheel Tappers and Shunters Social Club TV Show shown late on a Friday night across the ITV network.

Lancaster repeated its success of 1976 retaining the Northern League. In the same year Alan Lancaster was a bass guitarist with Status Quo who enjoyed a big hit in this year with "Rockin All Over The World".

In the 'House of York', the white rose flag once more floated in the breeze over the city of York as the club won the Yorkshire League title for the third time in the 1970s -

its success very much mirrored the film released in 1977 - "Close Encounters Of The Third Kind".

The last of the summer wine was still being enjoyed in Holmfirth as the town made famous for the filming of a TV programme of the same name won the Huddersfield League for the third successive season.

Travelling further north to the palm-fringed border between Yorkshire and Durham nobly represented by the River Tees, Darlington was the name on everybody's lips. The club, formed in 1827, beat all comers to lift its first North Yorkshire & South Durham league title for fifteen seasons, with record breaking Durham Minor County's player Neil Riddell inspiring them in his first season at Feethams. Tyne Tees and Yorkshire television combined to stage the first live Breakfast Time TV programme as a pilot - whatever became of Breakfast Time Television you may ask?

The Durham Senior League celebrated its 75th anniversary with a match against a Geoffrey Boycott led Yorkshire side.

In Catherine Cookson country, Ron Fairweather of Ponteland produced the remarkable figures of 9 for 45 against Corbridge to prove, in that year at least in the Northumberland League, and in the words of Carly Simon's hit of the summer - "No One Does It Better". Ulham, current members of the Northumberland League, was formed in 1977.

In the Potteries, Longton re-affirmed its moniker as the "team of the 70s" being the winner of the North Staffs South Cheshire League - its third title in 8 seasons. Little Stoke repeated its triumph of 1976 in the Staffordshire Club Cricket Championship.

The Queen opened the last stretch of the M5 motorway at Exeter and aptly Exeter lifted the Devon League title. Exmouth's slow left arm spin bowler, Paddy Considine (who sadly died in the Autumn of 2016), took in excess of 50 wickets. This was a time when there were no limitations on the number of overs that could be bowled in match. and Ian Roberts of Plymstock sent down 329 overs in

the season. He must have deserved a bottle of beer at the end of that summer - it would have cost 40p! "Way Down" was a number 1 hit for Elvis Presley and at the foot of Cornwall, Prase lifted the West Cornwall Evening Mining League. Poldark country also saw Penzance in a fascinating joint venture with Camborne Technical College open its new scoreboard and wooden sightscreens constructed by the students during the summer term of 1977.

In cider country, Almondsbury won the senior division of the Bristol and District League and are still going strong today whereas Lower Weston Sports of Bath, who secured the North Somerset Weekend Cricket League, has long since folded. Such are the contrasting fortunes of grassroots cricket!

Moving along the M4 corridor, Reading made it three league titles in four seasons in the Thames Valley Competition. Trojan became the first ever winners of the Southern League's Evening KO Cup beating Deanery in the final, proving, at the very least, that the competition in the words of the Barry Biggs big hit of the summer that it was no "Sideshow". Richard Lewis picked up the Man of the Match Award.

Saturday Night Fever was all the rage in this year, none more so than at Malden Wanderers in south London, which ended the three year domination of Dulwich to win the Surrey Championship. The Good Life TV programme was supposed to be set in the leafy Surrey suburbia of Surbiton in 1977.

Across 'Mother Thames', there was no stopping Southgate which went the season unbeaten, but also won the National Club Competition.

15th April 1977 saw the release of one of the most outstanding albums of its generation - Rattus Norvegicus by "The Stranglers" - key to the band was keyboard player Dave Greenfield who was born in Brighton.

Ringmer continued its dominance on the "greenfields" of East Sussex Cricket winning its fourth title in six seasons.

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Close Of Play

The league notes from around the country will no doubt hearten the ECB as they suggest that the participation and ‘Get The Game On’ drum beats of the last few years have resonated with a significant number.

Many leagues have made significant changes at their last AGMs and it will certainly be interesting to see how these turn out. One thing is already clear and that is that a tremendous amount of work is being done by volunteers up and down the country to address cricket’s problems.

The significantly changing league cricket landscape has also focused the executive’s

attention on the future structure of League Cricket Conference and, in the best traditions of gaining insight from those ‘at the coal face’, we will be seeking our members views at the impending AGM and general meeting, so we do hope you will make a real effort to attend in what is likely to be one of LCC’s most important ever gathering.

I would like to end by mentioning Malcolm Buck who has decided to stand down from LCC after many years of wonderful service to our members. He has done much of the research and work in putting this latest

newsletter together but that is, of course, just the ‘tip of the iceberg’ in terms of what he has contributed, often going way above and beyond the requirements of the ‘job’ in helping clubs up and down the country with their problems – he will be sorely missed.

Chris West
Chairman

Edited by John Isterling and Chris West.

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