



ENGLAND AND WALES CRICKET BOARD

PITCH DOCUMENT

2017

Introduction

This document is intended to pull together all relevant information that is appropriate to the marking and monitoring of pitches in both international and domestic cricket for the 2017 season.

In respect of domestic cricket, this document applies to the three First XI competitions and also, where appropriate (for example the criteria for the rating of pitches), to Second XI cricket, MCC Universities matches against Counties and tourist matches etc.

Please note that wherever penalties may be applied in domestic cricket, for the avoidance of doubt, if a match is played at an outground or a neutral venue (with particular reference to another County HQ), any resulting pitch penalty is applied to the “home” team and not the County hosting the match.

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INTERNATIONAL MATCHES

Both Test Match and One-Day International pitches are included within the protocol below:

Objective

The England Cricket Department will confirm via letter to the home authority the nature of the pitch and the practice facilities required for the international matches at that venue. Any communication from the home authority during the preparation of the pitch will be with the England Cricket Department or the Cricket Operations Department, who will pass on any relevant information as appropriate.

Monitoring Process and Maintenance of Standards

Quality of international pitches and outfielders are monitored via an ICC Pitch and Outfield Report completed by the ICC Match Referee. A report on the preparation of the pitch is also submitted by the Head Groundsman.

ICC's Pitch and Outfield Monitoring Process is available [here](#) Additionally, ECB staging agreements lay down requirements for the venue in respect of pitch, outfield and other matters which should be referenced as appropriate.

Cores

Should a core need to be taken for analysis, it should be taken 2ft 6in in from each edge of the pitch, half way between the two ends of the pitch.

Covering

Covering regulations as laid down by ICC will apply.

Domestic Matches

Rating of Pitches

FIRST CLASS MATCHES (3 DAYS OR MORE)

In matches where a CLO is appointed, the CLO shall be ultimately responsible for the rating of pitches. In other cases, it shall be the Match Umpires.

Objective

Pitches should be prepared to provide an even contest between bat and ball and should allow all disciplines in the game to flourish. In all cases, pitches will be judged on how they play, and not whether they are dry or what colour they are etc.

Pitch Categories and Criteria

In accordance with the objective for the preparation of 4-day pitches, the following are the agreed categories and criteria for the rating of first-class cricket pitches.

Fulfilment of the lowest criteria will determine the overall rating for the pitch. For example, if the pitch demonstrates:

No unevenness of bounce at any stage throughout the match, and

At most, occasional seam movement at all stages of the match, and

Aoderate turn from the protected area throughout the match BUT

Lacks carry and/or bounce at any stage of the match,

then it must be rated "Below Average" due to the failure to meet a higher carry and/or bounce criterion.

CLOs/Umpires should take into account the nature and identity of spin bowlers when assessing the amount of turn that the pitch has demonstrated.

	Unevenness	Seam Movement	Carry and/or Bounce	Turn
Very Good	At most, occasional unevenness of bounce at any stage of the match	At most, occasional seam movement at all stages of the match	Good carry and/or bounce throughout the match.	A little or moderate turn from the protected area on the first two days, wearing to considerable turn from the protected area on the third and fourth days of play OR moderate turn from the protected area throughout the match.
Good			Average carry and/or bounce throughout the match.	No turn from the protected area throughout the match
Above Average	At most, more than occasional unevenness of bounce on the third or fourth playing days of the match.	At most, regular seam movement at any stage of the match	Lacking carry and/or bounce on the third or fourth playing days of the match.	Considerable turn from the protected area on the first or second playing days of the match OR Excessive turn from the protected area on the third or fourth playing days of the match.
Below Average	At most, more than occasional unevenness of bounce on the first or second playing days of the match.		Lacking carry and/or bounce on the first or second playing days of the match.	Excessive turn from the protected area on the first or second playing days of the match.
Poor	Excessive unevenness of bounce for any bowler at any stage of the match	Excessive seam movement at any stage of the match		
Unfit	A pitch is rated unfit only if it is dangerous			

If it is not possible to make a reasonable assessment of turn because insufficient overs of spin have been bowled, then the 'Turn' column of the table should be ignored when providing the overall pitch rating.

Clarifications

- Excessive means “too much”. It is recognised that even on the best pitches a delivery can demonstrate “excessive” behaviour. In assessing a pitch rating therefore, “how often” must be considered along with “how much”.
- It is recognised that a limited amount of seam movement may occur early in the match and that a pitch may develop some unevenness of bounce for seam bowlers as the match progresses. This is acceptable, but should not develop to a point where they would be described as “excessive”.
- There is nothing wrong with a pitch that affords some degree of turn on the first day of a match though anything more than occasional unevenness of bounce at this stage of the match is not expected. It is to be expected that a pitch will turn steadily more as a match progresses, and it is recognised that a greater degree of unevenness of bounce may develop.
- It is impossible to quantify the amount that a ball is “allowed” to turn as bowlers will impart spin on the ball in differing amounts. The type and identity of bowler shall be taken into account when assessing this factor.

In no circumstances should the pitch ‘explode’ / ‘go through the top’ though again, “how often” must be considered.

LIMITED OVERS MATCHES

In matches where a CLO is appointed, the CLO shall be ultimately responsible for the rating of pitches. In other cases, it shall be the Match Umpires.

Objective

For the duration of the match, the whole surface of the pitch should be completely dry, firm and true, providing good carry and even bounce throughout. There should be little or no turn and little or no seam movement.

(Note: The above statement is an *objective* - there is no stipulation that one-day pitches *must* be dry, though it is of course expected that this and the rest of the stated objective should be aspired to in the preparation of all one-day pitches. In all cases, pitches will be judged on how they play, and not whether they are dry or what colour they are etc).

Pitch Categories and Criteria

Fulfilment of the lowest criteria will determine the overall rating for the pitch. For example, if the pitch:

Demonstrates no unevenness, and lacks carry and/or bounce, BUT

Demonstrates regular turn,

then it must be rated "Below Average". Umpires should take into account the nature and identity of spin bowlers when assessing the amount of turn that the pitch has demonstrated.

	Unevenness	Seam Movement	Carry and/or Bounce	Turn
Very Good	Little or no unevenness	Little or no seam movement	Good	Little or no turn
Good			Average	
Above Average	Occasional	Occasional	Lacking	Occasional
Below Average	More than occasional	Regular	Minimal	Regular
Poor	Excessive	Excessive	Very Minimal	Excessive
Unfit	A pitch is rated unfit only if it is dangerous			

Further Guidance for Umpires

As a matter of routine the Umpires should immediately contact the Cricket Liaison officer, or if not present, ECB Cricket Operations if at any time they are in any way unhappy with a pitch, regardless of the number of wickets that have fallen, or if they are going to or have rated the pitch “Poor” or “Unfit”.

Whilst Umpires are encouraged to discuss the overall quality of a pitch, they should provide an overall rating for the pitch independently.

Below Average, Poor or Unfit Pitches

ECB Directive 11 states:

“Each County shall comply with the provisions of the ECB Pitch Document”.

For the purpose of maintaining the highest standard of pitches in all matches, the relevant provision is the following:

Each County shall actively seek to prepare the best quality cricket pitch that it can for the match that it is staging.

For matches in the three First XI competitions (Specsavers County Championship, NatWest T20 Blast and Royal London One-Day Cup), a pitch that is marked Below Average (as a result of seam movement, unevenness or turn), Poor or Unfit by the CLO (or at least one of the Umpires if a CLO is not present) shall be subject to an investigation to assess whether there has been a potential breach of this provision and therefore the Directive. That investigation shall be carried out by either a CLO (not the CLO who has rated the pitch) or the Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee. The Pitches Consultant or his nominee shall provide the necessary technical input. The investigation shall normally be completed within 5 days. Unless circumstances require otherwise and only after being approved by the Pitches Consultant or his nominee, the pitch being investigated shall not be cut, watered etc until the Pitches Consultant or his nominee has inspected the pitch.

Evidence shall be sought from (not exhaustive):

- Home team Captain and Coach
- The Head Groundsman of the Home County and/or the Groundsman of the Outground (interviewed together)
- The Umpires
- The Away team Captain and Coach (interviewed together)
- Television coverage

The investigation shall consider:

- whether the rating given to the pitch was correct and if not, what the correct rating should be;

- whether were any circumstances relating to the preparation of the pitch that were beyond the control of the County, and
- whether the County actively sought to prepare the best quality pitch it could for the match that it was staging.

The question is whether the County had done everything possible to prepare the best quality pitch. Regard should be had, among other things, to staffing, covering, match scheduling and pitch preparation, and any factors beyond the control of the County which may have been responsible for the production of the Below Average, Poor or Unfit pitch.

The County may assert that the condition of the pitch was a result of an attempt or attempts to improve the quality of their pitches, in which case the investigation shall consider –

Whether the County was genuinely attempting to improve the quality of their pitches, and

Whether the County acted reasonably in all the circumstances in staging the match on the pitch in question.

In all cases of:

A Poor or Unfit pitch, or

after a second case, in the same competition, of a Below Average pitch in a 12-month period (both Below Average pitches rated such as a result of seam movement, unevenness or turn),

the outcome of the investigation(s) shall be discussed with the Chairman of the ECB Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) who shall determine the course of action in accordance with CDC Regulations.

CDC Regulations in force from time to time shall apply in respect of procedures, penalties and costs, and appeals.

For the avoidance of doubt:

- **Penalties can only be applied if a pitch has been marked Poor or Unfit, or is a second case, in the same competition, of a Below Average pitch for that County in a 12-month period (both Below Average pitches rated such as a result of seam movement, unevenness or turn), AND ECB Directive 11 has been breached. It is unlikely that a County will be penalised if a Poor or Unfit pitch, or either of the Below Average pitches results from a genuine and reasonable attempt to improve the quality of its pitches.**
- **The criterion (or criteria) resulting in a Below Average pitch do(es) not need to be the same for both of the Below Average pitches.**

- **If a County has been penalised as a result of two Below Average pitches in a 12-month period, then a further two Below Average pitches in that competition shall be required before a discipline charge is brought, at which, and at its discretion, a CDC Panel may take into account previous incidents of Below Average, Poor, or Unfit pitches.**

Cores

Cores shall not be routinely taken. However, should a Cricket Liaison Officer (CLO) request to see cores, they should be taken 2ft 6in in from the edge of the pitch on a spinner's length at each end. They should be taken on the off-side to a right-handed batsman.

If a CLO is appointed to attend after the commencement of a Specsavers County Championship match, he may request that two additional cores are taken. This will be done at the Umpires' discretion (the CLO should liaise with the Groundsman to arrange a mutually convenient time). The Umpires shall also be present and the cores shall be replaced.

Pitch Protocol

The re-use of pitches – 3,4-day pitches

The following guidelines with regard to pitch preparation and the use/re-use of pitches in Championship matches will apply for the 2017 season:-

(i) **One-Day Matches prior to County Championship Matches**

In the 7-day period leading up to a County Championship match, it is expected that a maximum of **one** one-day match will be played on the same pitch that is to be used for the Championship match. Ultimately, the choice of pitch remains with the County and it is emphasised that re-using a pitch will not exonerate a County from a possible sanction as detailed in this document.

Counties are strongly advised to prepare an alternative pitch for the Championship match in case the original pitch is damaged.

(ii) **Consecutive County Championship Matches**

It is expected that a second consecutive first-class match will not be played on the same pitch as the first within 7 days from the *scheduled* finish of the first. Ultimately, the choice of pitch remains with the County and it is emphasised that re-using a pitch will not exonerate a County from a possible sanction as detailed in this document.

Re-use of pitches – limited overs pitches

If possible, a fresh pitch should be used for one-day matches though it is understood that this is not always possible. Ultimately the choice of pitch remains with the County but it is recommended that only in exceptional circumstances should a one-day match be played on the pitch on which a Championship match had just been completed (for example where the amount of play in the Championship match has been severely limited and the pitch used is the best available for the limited-overs match). If this is the case, then the home County must notify the visiting team for the one-day match.

Surface Stabilisation Agents (SSAs)

ECB Directive 11 states:

“Each County shall comply with the provisions of the ECB Pitch Document”.

In respect of Surface Stabilisation agents, the provisions that refer are as follows:

Subject to the remainder of this paragraph, the application of Surface Stabilisation Agents (enzymes, PVA glue or similar) during the preparation of a County Championship pitch is not permitted. Specifically this means that any pitch that has had the agent applied at any stage during the season in question (eg for use in other matches) may not be used for a County Championship match until 42 days after the conclusion of the match in which the SSA was used.

The application of Surface Stabilisation Agents (enzymes, PVA glue or similar) during the preparation of a 1-day pitch is permitted. However the SSA must be applied uniformly across the length and breadth of the pitch. ECB Cricket Operations must be informed if a SSA is to be used.

Any Championship pitch that is alleged to have been treated by an SSA in breach of the regulations set out above shall be subject to an investigation. That investigation shall be carried out by either a CLO or the Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee. The Pitches Consultant or his nominee shall provide the necessary technical input. The investigation shall normally be completed within 5 days. Unless circumstances require otherwise and only after being approved by the Pitches Consultant or his nominee, the pitch being investigated shall not be cut, watered etc until the Pitches Consultant or his nominee has inspected the pitch.

Evidence shall be sought from (not exhaustive):

- Home team Captain and Coach
- The Head Groundsman of the Home County and/or the Groundsman of the Outground (interviewed together)
- If necessary and at the discretion of the CLO/Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee, the Umpires

- If necessary and at the discretion of the CLO/Heads of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee the Away team Captain and Coach (interviewed together)
- Television coverage

The investigation must consider the following questions:

- **Whether an SSA had been applied to the pitch at any stage of the season in question and if so what was the date of the conclusion of the match for which such SSA application was made.**
- **If an SSA had been applied to the pitch in respect of a match that had concluded within the 42 day period prior to the commencement of the County Championship match, whether the County had established on the balance of probabilities that there were sufficient extenuating circumstances relating to the use of the SSA.**

The outcome of the investigation shall be discussed with the Chairman of the ECB Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) who shall determine the course of action in accordance with CDC Regulations.

CDC Regulations shall apply in respect of procedures, penalties and costs, and appeals.

Covering the pitch and surrounding areas

Playing Condition 11 in each of the respective competitions refers.

Whales / Blotters

All Counties must have available at least one fully operational sit-on whale machine or Blotter. If this level of cover is not available, then both the opposition and ECB must be informed with reasons given.

Changing Venues

Specsavers County Championship Playing Condition 3.4 refers.

Condition of playing area (includes pitch, square, outfield)

(Refer also Specsavers County Championship Playing Condition 3.4)

ECB Directive 11 states:

“Each County shall comply with the provisions of the ECB Pitch Document”.

In respect of the condition of the playing area, the relevant provisions are as follows:

It is the onus of the Home County to ensure that no actions either prior to or during the scheduled period of the match shall materially adversely impact upon the condition of the playing area including pitch, square and outfield such that the possibility of play is substantially reduced.

- Actions that would be outside the Home County's control would include the weather and other Acts of God. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.
- Actions that would be within the Home County's control would include the staging of events other than the International, First XI and Second XI fixture programme and covering that does not meet the minimum requirement (Refer County Championship Playing Condition 11). This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

Subsequent to a report from the Match Umpires that any part of the playing area is unfit for play and which the Umpires and/or CLO believe may be a consequence of actions within the Home County's control and materially reduced the possibility of play, an investigation shall be carried out by either a CLO or the Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee. The Pitches Consultant or his nominee shall provide the necessary technical input. A verbal report from the Umpires must be made immediately they have any concern regarding the condition of the playing area and the circumstances surrounding it, and should be supported by a thorough written statement. The investigation shall normally be completed within 5 days.

Evidence shall be sought from (not exhaustive):

- Home team Captain and Coach
- The Head Groundsman of the Home County and/or the Groundsman of the Outground
- If necessary and at the discretion of the CLO/Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee, the Umpires
- If necessary and at the discretion of the CLO/Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee, the Away team Captain and Coach

The investigation must address the following:

- **To decide whether the condition of any part of the playing area was legitimately judged as being unfit for play. In doing so, the playing conditions should be strictly adhered to:**

If at any time the umpires together agree that the conditions of ground, weather or light are so bad that there is obvious and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire, so that it would be unreasonable or dangerous for play to take place, then they shall immediately suspend play, or not allow play to commence or to restart. The decision as to whether conditions are so bad as to warrant such action is one for the umpires alone to make.

The fact that the grass and the ball are wet and slippery does not warrant the ground

conditions being regarded as unreasonable or dangerous. If the umpires consider the ground is so wet or slippery as to deprive the bowler of a reasonable foothold, the fielders of the power of free movement, or the batsmen of the ability to play their strokes or to run between the wickets, then these conditions shall be regarded as so bad that it would be unreasonable for play to take place.

- **If the answer to the above question is yes, it must be determined whether, on the balance of probabilities, any action taken by the County relating to the condition of the playing area had a material adverse effect on the possibility of play.**

The outcome of the investigation shall be discussed with the Chairman of the ECB Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) who shall determine the course of action in accordance with CDC Regulations.

CDC Regulations in force from time to time shall apply in respect of procedures, penalties and costs, and appeals.

Deliberate choice of lesser quality pitch when a better one is available (Limited-over pitches only)

ECB Directive 11 states:

“Each County shall comply with the provisions of the ECB Pitch Document”.

In respect of deliberate choice of a lesser quality pitch, the relevant provisions are as follows:

Each County shall actively seek to prepare the best quality cricket pitch that it can for the match that it is staging.

In situations where the Umpires or CLO are concerned regarding the correct exercising of responsibility by a County over the choice of a pitch (ie electing to play on a certain pitch when it can reasonably be said that a better pitch was available), then the Umpires should formally report the matter to ECB. If the pitch in question is subsequently marked Below Average or worse, an investigation shall be undertaken. That investigation shall be carried out by either a CLO (not the CLO marking the pitch) or the Head of Operations (First-Class Cricket) or his nominee. The Pitches Consultant or his nominee shall provide the necessary technical input. The investigation shall normally be completed within 5 days. Unless circumstances require otherwise and only after being approved by the Pitches Consultant or his nominee, the pitch(es) being investigated shall not be cut, watered etc until the Pitches Consultant or his nominee has inspected the pitch.

The outcome of the investigation shall be discussed with the Chairman of the ECB Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) who shall determine the course of action in accordance with CDC Regulations.

CDC Regulations in force from time to time shall apply in respect of procedures, penalties and costs, and appeals.

Report Forms

CLOs will complete a pitch report in respect of every match that they visit. The report will be forwarded to ECB Cricket Operations as soon as possible after the end of the match.

Should a CLO not be present at a match, Umpires will complete report forms for each match. Umpires should agree how the pitch has performed in each of the four categories (unevenness, seam movement, carry and/or bounce, turn) **but they should provide an overall rating for the pitch independently.**

(Pitches will also be marked by the Captains, though only the Umpires ratings will be significant when pitch schedules and tables are produced).

CRICKET LIAISON OFFICERS

Personnel

The following individuals will be acting as Cricket Liaison Officers (CLOs) in 2017:

1. Tim Boon
2. Dean Cosker
3. Graham Cowdrey
4. Stuart Cummings
5. Steve Davis
6. Richard Ellison
7. Wayne Noon
8. Tony Pigott
9. Lloyd Tennant
10. Phil Whitticase

Should any technical advice be required by a CLO, this shall be provided by the ECB Pitch Consultant or his nominee.

Appointments

All CLO appointments will be made by ECB Cricket Operations.