

Dear Captain/Attendee,

Thank you for taking the time to attend our recent round of Zoom Conference Calls. Over 75% of our member clubs connected with over ten calls. I trust you found your call worthwhile and informative.

Please find below a brief summary of discussion that took place during the calls;;

At the commencement of each call Gary Roberson (WCL Cricket Sub Committee Chairman) welcomed all call invitees and overviewed best practice for each call and then passed on to Stuart Lampitt (SL) who gave a brief overview of where recreational cricket was at this point and explained that the purpose of the call was to identify what position clubs were in during the lockdown period with regards to finance, ground and facilities and general wants and preferences for any future cricket that may be contested if the Governments 'return to' phase allowed. During the 5th and 6th calls to our Division Two clubs SL reminded everyone of the ECB press release which was released on that day which identified that the recreational game currently remains suspended until further notice – with the sole exception of the use of outdoor cricket facilities (nets and pitches) for the purpose of undertaking exercise. There is no current start date for competitive recreational cricket.

Each club present was then asked to give a 2 to 3 minute overview of their clubs current position with regards to finance, ground and facilities and preferred match formats for which the main summary is as below;

1. Finance

- The majority of clubs reported that they were not too concerned about their current financial status due to the award of various Grant Aid received from both Government and Sport England. No club suggested they were in immediate trouble but some did say that in future they would need to be prudent with their finances moving forwards.
- A small amount of clubs expressed concern in being a smaller part of a bigger Sports Club as most of the Small Business Rate Relief that was distributed would go to the Sports Club and very little if any at all would be distributed to the smaller member.

2. Grounds & Facilities

- Due to the fact that a number of club members from across the county had been furloughed and had taken time to help at club grounds in their downtime all clubs reported that their fine turf facilities were in very good order and would be ready to play on a prepared strip with 10 to 14 days' notice. Cookley reported that their sightscreens were in poor condition and Oldswinford & Stourbridge Social reported that their screens had been vandalised but were on the brink of being replaced. Barnards Green had taken the time to insert new underground drainage towards the pavilion side of the ground.
- A lot of outstanding work had been delivered by volunteers in organised working parties keeping social distancing regulations in mind.
- Concern was raised by one or two clubs that if we chose to extend the season this could well impact on the short timescale for fine turf renovation which was duly noted

and one or two raised concerns about fielding teams later in September due to University students leaving and the continual problem of the football season, etc.

- Lower down the divisional structure more clubs expressed concern over extending the season although most clubs who do not have ground availability in September were keen to continue if possible and play matches away from home

3. Match Playing Formats/Conditions

a. Match Format/Playing Conditions

- If recreational cricket were to start in early to mid-August the majority of clubs expressed more interest in playing 50 over a side win/lose cricket than any other format. However, if the season was only 4 to 5 weeks most clubs suggested they would be happy with a regionalised competition based around smaller groups leading to a potential Final.
- Some clubs also suggested that a T/20 competition where teams are drawn in Groups of 3 could be organised if the season was only 4 to 5 weeks in duration. The WCL already had plans in place for a very shortened season.
- The WCL also suggested that fining and penalising clubs for fielding under manned teams or actually conceding matches would be extremely unlikely in the current climate. The WCL, like its member clubs wants to play as much cricket as possible but also understands the difficulty clubs will have in raising teams to cover all matches.

b. Promotion/Relegation

- A high majority of clubs were in favour of no promotion and relegation due to the fact that in a shortened season (50% would need to start on 1st August) there were still far too many variables from the norm to merit promotion and relegation.
- A small number of clubs still supported promotion/relegation due to the fact that this would make the cricket more competitive.
- An idea for Committee discussion was the idea of carrying points forward from any remaining WCL matches to 2021 therefore still providing a competitive environment and giving clubs something to play for rather than a smaller group based competition.

c. Overseas Players

- All clubs were passive about the overseas situation and weren't concerned if clubs did play overseas players as the majority of overseas players agreements had been cancelled. All clubs found there to be no merit whatsoever in 'wasting' money on an overseas player who may not be able to aid the club to promotion if there is none.

- The point of WCL having a special dispensation for a genuine worker coming in from a foreign country was raised and the WCL said they would look at each application on an individual basis.

d. **Travel/Regional Cricket**

- The majority of clubs expressed their wish to play half a season as their primary goal. However, in the current climate it seems increasingly unlikely that any cricket will be played in the immediate future as ECB recently announced that the Professional game would not start until at least Saturday 1st August, 2020 and the recreational game currently remains suspended until further notice – with the sole exception of the use of outdoor cricket facilities (nets and pitches) for the purpose of undertaking exercise.. This thought process led clubs to suggest that if there was less than half a seasons play it they would be better served being split into smaller, more local groups to cut travel. Colwall CC also raised the point that the death rate in relation to Covid19 in Herefordshire was much lower than in some areas of the Leagues coverage which further supports the delivery of smaller, more local travel rather than Burghill to Oldswinford for example..

e. **Questions from Clubs**

- Umpire safety
- Subscriptions
- Ball orders
- Teas

4. **AOB**

- The question of Umpires standing was raised to which the WCL officers suggested that Mike Neal (WCL Umpires Chairman) would need to survey the umpires panel to see who and how many were still happy to stand and officiate if we did get some play of some form later in the season. This would then give us a steer as a high number of officials are classed to be in the 'at risk' category during the early stages of the outbreak.
- The question of why League Subscriptions and balls needed to be paid was raised by a couple of clubs to which the WCL explained that they too, as well as clubs were a small business but had less opportunity to access grant aid which left the League in a very dangerous position if subscriptions (and ball monies) as below were not collected. The WCL explained that If it did return ball payments to clubs, the League would need to borrow money to cover the missing income. The balls are due any day and we already have the invoices. It is a certainty that the price of balls will increase next season which is why the WCL want clubs to purchase all of their 2020 allocation, especially as so many are now in a fairly good financial position and will no doubt spend much less on balls in 2021. The WCL reiterated that it will listen to clubs with severe cash problems for whom this is difficult. The WCL also informed clubs that no matter what they will be looking at a potential 5 figure loss due to its financial model and will start feeling the pinch next April when fewer balls are purchased by clubs as they will have stock left over from their 2020. It was also suggested by the WCL that by purchasing the cricket balls this year this would be cheaper for clubs than in 2021 as the cost of balls will need to increase if the WCL is to claw back its losses over a 3 to 4 year period and pay off

any ECB Loan it may be applying for. It was also pointed out that 80% of the role of the WCL happens during the Autumn to Spring period whilst preparing for the new season ahead (such as the preparation and delivery of the Annual Dinner, Handbook, preparation and publishing of fixtures, ball orders, umpiring appointments, working with partners, player registration and transfers to name but a few) and the subscription fee (which remains a lot lower than most Leagues) was to cover the whole year and not just the cricket playing months (where clubs are still receiving WCL support in partnership with the Worcestershire Cricket Board Limited).

- The query on Teas and how this would or could be delivered raised its head on a number of occasions and the WCL responded by suggesting that when and if the ECB and government decided to lift the suspension and potentially allow cricket matches to be played there would be a “How To” guide accompanying this which would identify best practice in a number of areas, such as Tea provision, bar availability, toilet and changing facility usage. The WCL expected that Teas would be very much a ‘bring your own’ affair and that players would potentially have the responsibility to bring their own food and hydration to matches

Following the initial tranche of Zoom conference calls the WCL officials held a brief discussion afterwards and agreed the following: -

1. The Cricket Committee of WCL will provide member clubs with competitive and meaningful cricket matches in 2020 if, and when, an opportunity arises.
2. The League is prepared to be creative to maximise any opportunity that does arise but there will be restrictions such as ground availability and ground sharing issues to be considered.
3. Following the calls and due to the fact the ECB announced that the Professional game would not start until at least Saturday 1st August, 2020 and the recreational game currently remains suspended until further notice – with the sole exception of the use of outdoor cricket facilities (nets and pitches) for the purpose of undertaking exercise the WCL felt it necessary to compile and distribute a small questionnaire/ survey that it would like all Captains of all teams to answer. This will be distributed when the WCL needs to know the number of teams that each club wishes to enter into whatever structure we are left with (if at all). The fact that we are all in the dark with regards to a start date means that the WCL needs to and is preparing match programmes from 11 weeks in length down to 4 weeks.

All Captains represented their clubs well, spoke freely and made valuable contributions to the calls.

Again, thank you for your time. We will be in touch again in around 4 weeks’ time to go over the latest guidance and when we may potentially know a little more about what the ECB propose for recreational cricket for the remainder of the season.

In the meantime, stay safe and please remember to adhere to ECB guidelines regarding practice.

Kind Regards,

Stuart Lampitt

Worcestershire County League, Administrator.