



National Club Championship – Competition Restructuring Proposal Consultation Document

In recent years entries into the National Club Championship (currently sponsored by Royal London) have slowly decreased. In 2006, 356 clubs entered, this year 220.

This is mainly down to three factors:

- The final not being held at Lord's.
- The introduction of the Club T20 with coverage of the final on Sky Sports.
- Societal change impacting on habits where playing twice in a weekend is less attractive.

Following recent insight work carried out by the ECB Strategy Team in conjunction with Populus, it was decided this loss of focus on the competition had led to questions about its validity in the current competitions offer for clubs.

As a result of this, the Competitions & Leagues Team have looked at possible ways of putting greater meaning into the competition.

Proposal

The competition is limited to 64 clubs. The clubs included will be based on finishing in the top two of their ECB Premier League in the previous season and a small number of clubs from other competitions i.e. performance in one season will determine qualification into the Club Championship the following season. As a result the competition will become a 'best v best' competition much like the Champions League in football or the Champions Cup in Rugby Union.

The competition will continue to be played as a straight knockout with teams from different leagues playing each other in the first round. Rounds will be played approximately once every three weeks from early June and will attempt to avoid date clashes with Minor Counties and other County/League cup competitions. Rounds in August and September will aim to avoid Club T20 competition.

ECB will continue to work with MCC with the aim of holding the Final at Lord's. The fall-back position is that the final will continue to be played at a First Class County ground and hopefully the winner of the final will be invited to play at Lord's in a one-off match.

Barriers

There needs to be enough of an incentive for teams to take part in the competition. No additional funding is available at present to put towards the competition as prize money so it is expected that the chance to receive accolade for being the 'best of the best' and to play at Lord's will be enough of an incentive to get buy-in from both clubs and leagues.

For the competition to be called 'the best of the best' it requires buy in from all leagues and clubs that their league winners/runners up will participate in the competition the following season. There could be exceptions i.e. third place team offered place if team above does not wish to take part, but this should be an exception rather than a rule or the competition will lose its impact.

Timescales

Gather feedback from clubs in June to present findings to the Premier League Chairman's meeting in July and gain a recommendation that can be shared prior to the end of the season.