

Background to the main playing condition changes being put to the 2016 AGM

When producing the revised and simplified versions of the League's playing conditions voted in at the 2015 AGM, the Executive Committee considered rewriting the sections dealing with registration and player eligibility to provide greater clarity about their intention and effect and to remove certain overlaps and contradictions. These provisions had been subject over the years to regular piecemeal additions and revisions and lacked coherence and a logical sequence. Also, and despite the changes made over time, the provisions for registration no longer reflected some of the changes in the process for registering players that had been made in the light of more advanced technology and greater use of Play-Cricket. However, it was decided that more time would be needed to undertake what would be an extensive piece of redrafting and, with that work done, those changes are now being brought forward a year later.

The delay proved fortunate as we became aware in the 2015 season that in one important respect our player definitions did not accord with ECB guidance. Our Playing Conditions need to reflect not only the League's policies but also the requirements of the ECB in assigning us Premier League status. What came to light in discussions between the Championship and the ECB over a particular eligibility issue was a variation between our respective definitions of what ECB refer to as "Category 3(e)" players, usually known as "Overseas Exempt". In an attempt to make our rule simple to understand and apply (by linking exemption to possession of an EU passport) we had opened the door to a range of players who fail the more stringent tests set out by the ECB, which are based on the concept of being "ordinarily resident" in England and Wales, and also on not having the playing of cricket as a main source of income.

Our former Playing Condition 13(h) which defined an Exempt Overseas player for Championship purposes, would clearly allow registration of players as Exempt Overseas who do not meet the requirements on residency and time spent in the UK required by ECB, nor the requirement that cricket must not be their main source of income. We believe that since playing condition 13(h) came into being in its current form all clubs in Premier and Division 1 have had their registrations dealt with even-handedly in accordance with that Playing Condition and the playing field has therefore been a level one so far as our competition is concerned

However, it is clear that we cannot continue as a Premier League without bringing our definition of Exempt Overseas in line with ECB's. The player definitions contained in the new Playing Condition are in accord with drafting produced by the ECB and were cleared with them before being finalised for presentation to the AGM. As this element of the changes being presented to the AGM is written in order to align us with Premier League requirements it is offered for noting but cannot be amended or voted against unless we are to surrender our Premier League status.

The other changes that are being proposed to definitions of player categories are for clarification and to provide a more logical flow to the entirety of the registration playing condition. The defining characteristics of an outright overseas ("category 3") player for the purposes of Premier and Division 1 are unchanged. The different definition of an overseas player for the purposes of clubs in Division 2 and below is also unchanged. The drafting as it related to contracted players is largely unchanged from what we had previously.