

BLOG: Andrew Strauss - Men's High Performance Review enters Consultation Stage

*Andrew Strauss, who is leading the Men's High Performance Review, outlines the review's next steps as provided information and data analysis on its initial findings and proposals ahead of the Consultation Phase.*

Today we will begin the consultation stage of the Men's High-Performance Review. This is an important phase of the process when the initial findings of this review and a number of draft ideas and proposals will be discussed with the professional game.

Our aim is simple – to have a high-performance system for English men's cricket which enables our men's teams to have sustained success across all formats, while having a thriving, future-proofed domestic game.

The findings, draft ideas and proposals have been informed by a thorough process including analysis of a range of important research as we consider how best we can achieve these goals.

Cricket is at a critical point with a fast-changing landscape and we must be prepared to be open minded and engage in considered debate if we are to move forward together and future-proof our game in the current climate.

The evidence presented in the review will provide the opportunity to have those well-informed discussions.

Amongst other findings, the research – which covers cricket across the world since 2014 – looks at the areas we can target to reduce the gap between the domestic game and international cricket. The analysis tells us that English players struggle more than players from other countries to transition from domestic to international cricket, how domestic spinners get less opportunities than in other countries and how overseas first-class experience is beneficial to Test cricketers.

I recognise that there will be a focus on potential changes to the men's domestic structure, and as we consult the game over the coming days we will discuss ways in which the issues we've identified could be addressed.

Initial options for the game to discuss include a revamped 50-over competition and a smaller LV= Insurance County Championship top division to ensure higher standards and more intense best v best red-ball cricket.

Our research shows that the First-Class Counties play a higher volume of cricket compared to the rest of the world, while feedback from players is that a reduction in the amount of men's domestic cricket played is essential.

Our role in this process has simply been to consult the best thought leaders in high performance and analyse the most robust data. We have made our initial proposals and findings and now it will be for the First-Class Counties to make any decisions over domestic structures – all we can do is provide them with informed recommendations. We want a thriving and future-proofed men's domestic game, in which all 18 First-Class Counties are established at the heart of our ambitions.

It will be important the First-Class Counties have the appropriate time to consider the final recommendations and to properly engage with their stakeholders. The First-Class County Chairs Representative Board has therefore proposed the 2023 LV= Insurance County Championship remains at 14 matches for each county.

This will allow more time for the debate about the best long-term structure from 2024 onwards to take place.

Whilst I recognise debates over our domestic structures are impassioned and will attract a lot of discussion, our review and proposals are much broader.

The analysis has shown us the need to create more opportunities for our players to play overseas with proposals to elevate the England Lions programme and play a North v South red-ball match in pre-season in the UAE.

The proposals look at the ways we can better reward all 18 First-Class Counties for talent development, performances and other key criteria which will allow them to pursue their purpose and relevance within the game.

From an England perspective the proposals look at how we could evolve Central Contracts to offer more security to our high-profile players and better reflect the changing dynamics in the world game. A strong identity and clear style of play for England teams in all formats is equally important in order to inspire players and connect with fans.

We will now debate the panel's proposals with many people in the professional game including the PCA, Directors of Cricket, First-Class County Chief Executives and Chairs. We will also continue to listen to and engage with supporters, including receiving findings from the Cricket Supporters Association annual survey before making our final recommendations.

At that point the work of the Men's High Performance Review will end.

The final recommendations will then be handed over to the ECB Board and to the First-Class Counties for them to discuss how they can implement them.

Between now and then I am looking forward to a healthy and constructive debate over the coming weeks before the Men's High-Performance Review produces a final report which will provide the game with a clear and well-researched pathway to sustained England Men's success and a healthy, vibrant, domestic game.

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