

North Essex Cricket League

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Chairman's pre-season letter

8 April 2017

From the League Chairman to all NECL member clubs

Dear all,

Some glorious weather is in prospect this weekend (including for today's Grand National), with 25°C forecast for tomorrow – let's hope it lasts as we look forward to the start of the NECL cricket season on 16th April (Easter Day.)

New member clubs

I start this letter by welcoming our new member clubs. Braintree CC return after a number of years absence and will be competing in both Division Four and the T/20 competition. Ipswich CC are another returning club, and they will compete in the T/20 along with 7 Para RHA CC from Colchester, who join the league for the first time. May I wish them, and all our clubs and their cricketers, an enjoyable season of competitive and enjoyable cricket.

The league competitions in 2017

This season we have 32 teams from 30 clubs competing in the main league competition, with 8 teams in each of the four divisions. (Great Horkeley & Lexden and Chappel & Wakes Colne again being the only two clubs with two teams.) This means 14 games for each team. After a successful first season in 2016 for the T/20 competition, when there were 7 participating clubs, this has expanded to 10 teams in 2017. The teams have been divided into two groups (roughly west and east areas) for the league phase of the competition, with the top two teams in each group then going forward to the Finals Day on August Bank Holiday Monday, 28 August 2017. This year Colchester & East Essex CC will be hosting the Finals Day at their Lower Castle Park ground. May I take this opportunity to repeat my thanks to Mistley CC who hosted a very successful inaugural finals day last year.

New League Secretary

I am pleased (and relieved!) to welcome Maria Stockdale from Frinton-on-Sea CC to the role of League Secretary, in succession to Michael Pulford and after a season (2016) without a secretary. Maria was elected at the AGM last October and is still 'learning the ropes'. Please give her your support in this key league role. Maria can be contacted at maria@necl.co.uk, but we are also retaining the e-mail address execcommittee@necl.co.uk. E-mails sent to this address are seen by all the

members of the Executive Committee (Neil Brinded, *vice-chairman*; Maria; Emma Harris, *treasurer*; Kevin Hewes, *results secretary*; and myself) so they can responded to by the appropriate person.

League Handbook

The management committee has made a decision not to publish a 'hard' copy of the handbook, but to do so only 'online' on the league website. This will be accessible and available to download in the next few days.

Fixtures: change of dates, venues or start times

A reminder that if clubs wish to rearrange any fixture, rule 18 requires that they must obtain the prior approval of the league secretary who, before agreeing to any request, must first obtain my agreement as league chairman, together with the agreement of the management committee representatives of the division concerned. Prior approval is not required, though, for a change of venue of a fixture (e.g. switching home and away), or for bringing the start time forward by mutual consent (though the results secretary, Kevin Hewes must be notified.) In the first place, please refer any fixture change requests to Kevin [results@necl.co.uk; tel 01206 626579 / 07507 667949]. Once any fixture change has been approved, Kevin will update the website and (for Division One and Two matches) inform the Umpire Appointments Officer, Dave Root.

Rule Changes

The updated league rules will be on the website shortly. Two changes were made at the 2016 AGM and come into effect this season:

- (i) An increase in the expenses to be paid to panel umpires from £25 to £30 each per match
- (ii) A new paragraph 8 in the Code of Conduct (Appendix One) about media comments (see below).

I take this opportunity to remind clubs of the following changes that were made at the 2015 AGM and continue this season.

New rule Rule 5B

Every member club shall have a fully qualified club welfare officer, whose name and contact details must be notified to the League Secretary and League Welfare Officer. As from 1 January 2017, any club that does not have a fully qualified club welfare officer at the start of each season will be fined £100 and, in addition, will suffer a 20 points deduction for each team entered in a League competition. Clubs must notify the League Secretary and League Welfare Officer of any change in the identity of their club welfare officer. [*Paul Harris, our league welfare officer, will be in contact with clubs to check that their CWOs are up-to-date with their training.*]

Rule 14 – batting bonus points in reduced overs matches

Amended so that there is one point for 50 completed runs, two for 75, three for 100, four for 125 and five for 150 in reduced overs games where, under rules 23 to 25, the innings on each side is reduced to between 20 and 25 overs. (There is no change to the bowling bonus points.)

Points in the T/20 League

Two points for a win; one each for a tie or cancelled game. (No bonus points.)

Penalty for failing to submit a complete umpire assessment form: Rule 32A

The penalty for clubs in Divisions 1 and 2 failing to submit a completed umpire assessment report is now as follows: "A club failing to submit a report as so prescribed will be deducted 5 points and a further 5 points for each week thereafter that any default continues." [*Clubs are required to submit the report online within 7 days after the date of the match.*]

Please contact me if you have any queries about the rules.

Club officers - changes

It is important that the League has an up-to-date list of club officers, in particular League Representatives, Fixture Secretaries and Club Welfare Officers. Please notify the League via execommittee@necl.co.uk immediately if there is a change in any of these roles (or a change of contact details) within your club: changes will then be posted on the league website.

Umpires and the Code of Conduct

A reminder, first, that panel umpires are appointed for all Division 1 and Division 2 matches. (The concession in 2016 whereby panel umpires were optional for Division 2 games applied only for that season). The appointments for April have already been posted on the league website. My thanks to our Umpire Appointments Officer, Dave Root, for arranging for neutral umpires: Dave's contact details are on the website. My thanks, too, to all the panel umpires for undertaking these important duties.

I want to emphasise again the importance of respecting ALL umpiring decisions. This applies to matches in which players from the batting side are standing as umpires, as well as to matches where there are panel umpires.

The need to respect umpires' decisions applies not just on the field of play, but to comments that may be made off the field, including on social media. As a result of comments brought to the league's attention last season, the following paragraph has been added to the Code of Conduct:

8. Players and team officials shall not make any media comment which is prejudicial or detrimental to the interests or reputation of others clubs or a member of any other club or any umpire or the game of cricket in general. Media shall include (but not necessarily be limited to) press, radio, television, external websites, club websites, social networking sites and club match programmes. Nothing in this provision shall prevent any comment which constitutes honest opinion in regard to cricketing matters and which is made in a fair and respectful manner.

Abuse or improper criticism of umpires' decisions will not be tolerated. Any alleged contravention of the Code of Conduct should be referred to the league and may lead to disciplinary proceedings against the club or club member concerned.

Umpiring in the lower divisions is frequently undertaken by players from the batting side, taking it in turns. I make no apology for repeating again what I have written about this in previous pre-season letters:

"Clubs have a responsibility to ensure that those who are asked to umpire or score are competent to undertake these important tasks. Sometimes, young players, who do not appear to know the basic laws, are sent out to umpire. This is not fair to either side. Please, therefore, consider carefully before sending someone out to umpire whether he or she is sufficiently competent and

confident to undertake this task. The helpful document, “*A Guide to Umpiring for Players*” can be downloaded from the League website. Please study this and ensure that it is read by any of your players who may be asked to umpire.”

Reports on umpires

May I remind the captains of all Division One and Two teams of their responsibility to complete the online assessment report on the umpires standing in the match. To avoid the points deduction penalty (see above), please make sure that the online report is completed by 12 noon on the Friday after the match.

2017 Presentation Dinner

The date for this year’s dinner is Saturday 18 November 2017: please note this now in your diaries, and avoid arranging any club events on that date. The venue will again be the Colne Valley Golf Club at Earls Colne. This is a good occasion and the golf club consistently provide excellent food. It is the one social event of the league’s year and the management committee would like to see all NECL member clubs represented this year.

2017 AGM

We thought we had fixed Wednesday 25 October 2017 at 8.00 pm at Colchester Rugby Club as the date and venue for the 2017 AGM. However, there is now a query over whether the rugby club is available on this date. Confirmation of the date and venue will be posted on the League website shortly, so please check and note the date when it is confirmed. (All clubs are required to be represented at the AGM.)

Reporting results

The League will be using the Play-Cricket results reporting system this year, instead of CricHQ. Please read the article that Kevin Hewes has posted on the League website for the details.

A few reminders about the reporting of results.

- First, the result of all matches must be notified by the home team no later than 10.00 pm on the day of the match, failing which the club will be fined £5.00 (see rule 29A(i)). This ensures that the results and up-to-date league tables can be posted on the website by (in most cases) midnight on the Sunday.
- Second, full details of the scorecard must be uploaded to the Play-Cricket online cricket management and results reporting system within 48 hours of the end of the match.
- The full names of all players must be entered (including any who do not bat) and the names of all those taking catches. Please also ensure that the captain and wicket-keeper for each team are recorded.
- Please also remember that if a match is abandoned or cancelled for any reason, it is still the obligation of the home side to report this by e-mail by 10 pm on the day of the fixture and to complete the online scoresheet accordingly. If the match has been part-played and then abandoned, details of the match as played need to be reported, since, although the match is ‘void’ in the tables, the individual performances will count in the end-of-season averages.

Rule 29A(ii) prescribes the fines imposed on clubs that fail to comply with the online reporting requirements. Please refer any queries about reporting results or the Play-Cricket system to Kevin Hewes.

Scoring

I make no apology for reminding clubs that checking the accuracy and completeness of the scorebook, both at the tea interval after the first innings and at the end of the game, is the responsibility of both captains, though they may delegate the keeping of the scorebook to another club member. **The away captain should not leave the ground after the end of the game unless and until he or she has checked that all the required details have been entered in the home team's scorebook.** This includes the names of **all** players and of those taking catches.

Weekly roundup

Many thanks again to Kevin Hewes for the informative and comprehensive roundup of the weekend's results that he posts on the league website by the following Wednesday. To assist him to enhance this feature of the website, please make sure, when you e-mail your result, that you include any notable performances (individual scores of 40 or more, and bowlers taking 4 wickets, plus any other highlights.) This also enables such performances to be noted in the NECL report in the Wednesday issue of the Colchester *Daily Gazette*. (I anticipate that Kevin will be using his crystal ball and posting his first article of the 2017 season next week, with his assessment of each team's likely final league position in September!)

League website

Members will have seen the 'revamp' of the website over the winter months. I want to thank John Hepburn for this and for maintaining what I consider to be one of the best league websites. The website is the league's noticeboard, so do visit it regularly to keep up-to-date with league news. We encourage news from clubs, so do send in match reports; photographs are also welcome.

Feedback

Recreational cricket, especially on Sundays, continues to face challenges, partly affected by societal changes, and these have even been the subject of a recent storyline of *The Archers!* (See, too, my letter in this week's *The Cricket Paper*). If you, or your club members, have any comments on how the League can better promote the playing of recreational cricket by more people in North Essex and South Suffolk, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me. I welcome any suggestions. Don't forget that with clubs playing only 14 league matches over the season, there will be 'blank' weekends when friendly games can be arranged. The League will be pleased to publish on the website notices from clubs seeking opponents for such games. Such matches can also provide the opportunity to play cricket for club members who do not get into the regular league side.

Enjoy the season, and do get in touch with me if there is anything you wish to raise about the League, or cricket generally.

Yours in the spirit of cricket,

DAVID LAMMING

League Chairman