

CHESHIRE WOMEN'S LEAGUE

The League clubs have agreed that, for 2021, the first division will revert to the format in which it was originally intended to play the 2020 season. The teams in this division will be Didsbury, Oakmere, Appleton, Chester Boughton Hall, Stockport Trinity, Leigh and Porthill Park, with the teams playing each other home and away.

Nantwich, Ashton-on-Mersey, Oxton, Upton and Stockport Georgians will again compete in division two, as will a new Porthill second team. Again, this division's fixtures will be on a home and away basis.

Automatic one-up, one-down relegation has been introduced between the first and second divisions.

There are more significant changes in the third and fourth divisions, where we welcome Hayfield as a new club, and also see Stockport Georgians, Lindow and Nantwich entering second teams in competitive cricket for the first time. Division 3 West will comprise Hawarden Park, Wistaston Village and the second teams of Chester Boughton Hall and Nantwich. The Division 3 East teams are Langley, Didsbury 2nd XI, Hayfield, Woodley and Lindow. In each of these divisions, the teams will play each other three times.

Division 4 will comprise Lymm Oughtrington Park, the joint Heaton Mersey & Cheadle team, the Hawk Green team that has relocated from Marple and the second teams of Stockport Georgians and Lindow. In this division, the teams will play each other on a home and away basis.

Divisions 1-4 will essentially use the regulations that existed when these competitions last operated in 2019. Regulation changes voted in for the season we planned to have in 2020 included:

- Batsmen will retire at 30 in the Senior Knockout Cup and the T20 Divisional Competition, but will still retire at 25 in the Development Knockout Cup
- All evening matches will be played with a pink ball
- Bowlers in division 3 can bowl no more than one-quarter of the overs in an innings - rounded up to the next whole number where this doesn't give a whole number. (This brings Division 3 into line with Divisions 1 & 2, the T20 Divisions and all the Cups, and Division 4 is now the only competition where a bowler can bowl as many as one-quarter of the overs in an innings)

The League will be retaining one of last year's Summer Series regulations in this year's competitions. In the event that a match in the League or T20 Divisional Competition does not take place because one or both teams have three or more players who are required to self-isolate, then the match should be re-arranged if possible. If no re-arrangement is feasible, then the points that the teams will each receive for that match shall be their average points from completed matches over the rest of the season in that competition.

For the most part, the Covid-19 hygiene regulations that applied for the shortened 2020 season will once again apply at the start of the 2021 season. These will be kept under review and any changes will be notified, but until further notice:

Before play:

- Captains and team officials should ensure that the total number of players plus match and team officials at any match will not exceed 30. This includes managers, coaches, umpires and scorers
- No one should attend a match if they have Covid-19 symptoms, or they have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test & Trace, or if someone in their household is exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms
- Teams should plan their arrival time at the ground so there is sufficient time for the usual pre-match preparations, such as warm-ups, but should otherwise minimise the time they spend at the ground prior to the scheduled start time
- The home club should compile a register of names and contact details of match participants, and should retain this information for 21 days, in case it is requested by NHS Test & Trace

- Car sharing with people from outside your household or official support bubble should be kept to an absolute minimum. Where there is no alternative method of getting to the match, consider mitigating the risk by:
 - o Wearing a face covering
 - o Sitting in the back left seat furthest from the driver
 - o Trying to share cars with the same person on each occasion
 - o Keeping the car well ventilated
 - Your kitbag needs to include:
 - o As much of your own equipment as possible – as little as possible should be shared, so this might mean going as far as ensuring back-up wicketkeepers take their own 'keeping kit
 - o Your own hand sanitiser, if at all possible
 - o Enough food and drink for the day

During play:

- Changing rooms cannot be used in the traditional way, where most or all of the team would be in the room. Players should arrive changed and ready to play and if changing rooms have to be used for certain procedures, they should be used for short periods on a 'one in, one out' basis
- Distancing of two metres should be maintained, except for wicketkeepers standing up to the stumps and slip fielders, where this can be one metre. Bowlers are asked to take extra care here when passing the umpire when returning to their mark for the next delivery
- Distancing must also be maintained during team gatherings, e.g. team talks, wicket celebrations
- Play should be halted every six overs – or every 20 minutes if this occurs sooner – to allow the players to sanitise their hands and to allow the fielding captain to sanitise the ball with an anti-bacterial wipe
- Sweat or saliva should not be used on the ball (note this differs from the regulations in a Test Match, where players openly use sweat on the ball)
- When the ball is dead, it must be returned directly to the bowler and not passed around the field
- The umpire should not be asked to handle the ball. In circumstances when it would normally be handed to the umpire, such as at the fall of a wicket, the ball should be placed at the base of the stumps
- Players should not hand clothing or caps to the umpire and should instead place these beyond the boundary
- The umpire will not provide a cloth to dry the ball, so it will be the responsibility of the players to provide this
- Players should not ask scorers to guard their valuables etc.
- Only the umpire should replace the bails when these are dislodged
- Where equipment has to be shared, it should be cleaned between each use
- A batsman is expected to sanitise their own bat on leaving the field of play
- The wicketkeeper is expected to sanitise their gloves at the end of the session of play
- Only one person should be inside a score box at any time
- Spectators should not get involved with retrieval of the ball when it is hit to the boundary
- If the match is of more than 20 overs per side in duration, it is likely there will still be tea and drinks intervals. However, you can only consume food and drink you have brought yourself – you cannot share drinks bottles, plates etc.
- If there is a rain interruption, players and officials cannot use the changing rooms for shelter. Players and officials can use their cars, and outdoor covered areas can be used where available. Clubhouse areas such as bars should only be used during interruptions in accordance with Risk Assessments carried out by the home club (this is something I have clarified directly with ECB myself – there is clearly a massive difference in available clubhouse space between some of our member clubs)

After play:

- All participants should sanitise their hands for one final time
- Use of the bar facility should comply with Government guidance

At present, it is also not feasible for clubs to provide matchday teas and other refreshments. This may change later in the season, but for simplicity, the League has agreed to suspend the requirement for home clubs to provide matchday teas for the entire 2021 season. It is recognised that there may be situations where clubs have contractual arrangements with external caterers, and so if it is the case that a matchday tea is to be provided, the home club should notify their opponents in advance of the day of the match.

As only 12 clubs now remain in the Senior Knockout Cup, and there will be only four first round losers, it has been decided not to run a Plate competition this year.

The 2021 fixtures have been circulated to club representatives and can also be viewed [here](#) and on the League and individual club Play Cricket sites. On the opening day in division 1, April 25, defending league champions Didsbury travel to Chester Boughton Hall.

In divisions 1 and 2, re-arrangements by mutual consent can only take place up until seven days prior to the start of the season, i.e. April 18. In all other competitions, re-arrangements by mutual consent can take place at any time up until the time of the fixture.

After April 18, division 1 and 2 re-arrangements will only be permitted due to ground unavailability, National Knockout commitments or exceptional circumstances such as Covid self-isolation.

Please let me know ASAP once any re-arrangements have been agreed.

Please refrain from re-arranging matches to August 22 (Finals Day) or September 19 (Finals Reserve Day).

Clubs in divisions 1 and 2 are required to provide me with at least a summary of their match results – runs, wickets, overs, significant individual performances - within 24 hours of the match taking place.

The League XI are scheduled to play the MCC on Thursday August 12 at 1130 at Nantwich CC.

The Division 5 softball competition in 2021 will see Alvanley, Runcorn, second teams Oakmere, Leigh and Wistaston and a third team from Chester making up a Western Division. Broadbottom, Toft, North East Cheshire, Macclesfield, Langley 2nd XI and Stockport Georgians 3rd XI will play in the Eastern Division. In line with the different wishes of the participating clubs, the Eastern Division will play home and away, while the Western Division clubs will play each other once only.

The League would be delighted to hear from any volunteers who believe that they could assist with a media and/or social media promotions strategy for the league. We feel we have a lot to be proud of and a great deal that is worth communicating to the outside world in the best possible way! The postholder need not be a media professional, it might for example suit a student who is studying marketing or journalism who aspires to make a career in journalism, communications or public relations etc.

League clubs will no longer be able to select anyone in school year 7 (secondary school year 1) to play in adult cricket in any circumstances, even if they have been selected to play for a county age group squad. Players from this age group should also not participate in senior training sessions. This is a Cheshire Board directive, not a League decision, and League officers do not have the power to grant exemptions to this rule. Cheshire have decided not to field a county Under 13 Girls team this year.

The League is aware that a number of clubs are considering video streaming of matches and other activities. While the League welcomes additional media coverage of any form, clubs must comply with the [ECB Photography, Filming and Social media broadcast Guidelines](#), and should seek appropriate further advice from their Welfare Officer if required. Any club wishing to live stream a match is advised to firstly contact the opposing team's captain or manager in advance of the matchday to advise them of their intentions. A further check must be made on the day of the match itself that all match participants are happy to be filmed.

Clubs are invited to make any suggestions for alternative formats for an end of season social event. It is recognised that it may be appropriate to adapt the League Dinner format, or hold a different type of event altogether, especially given the increase in the number of League clubs in recent years, and the fact that some clubs have very young playing squads.

Anyone with a suitable cover photo suitable for the home page of the re-designed League Play Cricket site is invited to submit it to me for consideration. Once again, anyone pictured will need to have consented to their image being shown on the internet.

The next meeting of the League Committee will be on Wednesday June 23 at 1930. A decision will be taken nearer the time as to whether this meeting will be conducted remotely or will be conducted face-to-face at a club venue.

Seven Stockport Trinity players – Sarah McCann, Kate Harvey, Katie Paterson, Carys White, Georgia Bath, Hannah Wicks and Ellie Mason - and three players from other League clubs – Didsbury's Zara Matthews, Gaby McKeever from Stockport Georgians and Georgia Heath from Appleton – have been selected to star in the Bollywood biopic of India captain Mithali Raj, although unfortunately filming has been postponed, after it was originally due to commence this month. League players make up one-third of the 30-strong contingent of UK players in the cast.

OTHER NEWS

North West Thunder are to play a number of their 2021 home matches at Chester Boughton Hall. Confirmed so far are two Bank Holiday dates – a 50-over Rachael Heyhoe-Flint Trophy match against the Sunrisers on May 31 and a Regional T20 clash against Northern Diamonds on August 30.

From April 12, identity document checks for DBS applications should take place face-to-face in an outdoor setting. The remote checking process that was previously in operation should no longer be used.