



From the Cheshire County Cricket League Executive to all Full Member Clubs

Introduction

You may well be aware of the complex situation that has occurred in the 2021 Cheshire Cricket League (CCL) Division 1 promotion race. In short, the outcome was that as undisputed champions we will be welcoming Cheadle Hulme 1st XI back into the County League. The race for the runner-up position however was not as clear cut. On the points system that the clubs voted and agreed at the start of the season, which awarded abandoned points for all covid cancelled games, Port Sunlight finished as runners up.

However, the CCL Executive changed the method of compiling the league tables mid-season to one where covid cancelled games were ignored and all other games were used to compile an average points per game figure for each team which then determined the league position. On this basis Hawk Green finished as runners-up.

Subsequent Developments

Port Sunlight appealed against the League decision that had been made which ultimately changed the League table arguing the decision was unconstitutional. To resolve the issue, the CCL Executive held a virtual SGM ballot asking the clubs to vote for one of the options. The papers for the vote also included a summary of the case as laid out by Port Sunlight, but no similar summary for the Hawk Green case which could be construed as prejudicial. The clubs voted for the original method which placed Port Sunlight in the County League. Predictably Hawk Green are not happy with this development and are attempting to get the decision overturned by the ECB.

Both clubs have taken legal advice, and the issue threatens to run for some time. Dependent on whatever action Hawk Green opt to take next, it could be a matter of many months before it is resolved. While it does not pose an immediate problem to the County League beyond not being able to resolve League fixtures or cup groupings in the 1st XI Cup it is a major problem for the CCL and recreational cricket in Cheshire as a whole.

Because of these events the League Executive has been considering what we could do to try to smooth over the issue and come up with a solution for Cheshire Cricket as a whole. The action we propose below has now been shared with the Cricket Committee of the County League, and with the Executive of the CCL and has been endorsed by both bodies.

Current Position

As a Premier League we along with all other such leagues have a duty of care role, placed with us by the ECB to take an active role in assisting feeder leagues to progress in their administration and to assist in resolving any problems that they may have.

We feel that allowing the saga to drag on is not in the best interests of either League, or Cheshire Cricket more generally as it will allow neither League to fully complete its organisational activity for the 2022 season, until it is fully resolved. We feel a solution needs to be found that removes the threat of legal proceedings being required to resolve matters.

The Proposed Changes

Our recommended solution is best explained in two parts. Feasibly, we could implement Part A without implementing Part B. However, we feel that the optimum approach will be to implement both parts as a total solution and therefore that is what we are proposing.

Part A

In 2022 the CCCL accepts Cheadle Hulme, Port Sunlight and Hawk Green 1st teams into our Division 2, relegating only Barrow from our Division 2 leaving us with fourteen teams and a twenty-six-game season in that division. This will mean four additional match slots will need to be found in the calendar. We propose these to be Easter Saturday (a week before the formal season starts), Spring Bank Holiday, Summer Bank Holiday, and the Sunday after the last Saturday of the season. At the end of the season three teams would be relegated with only one side promoted leaving the division with 12 teams for the 2023 season onwards. 2nd XI cricket would be unaffected.

Part B

Additional to Part A, the proposal is that the CCCL also adopts the CCL Division 1 and Division A in their entirety. These Divisions would become the CCCL Division 3 for 1st and 2nd teams respectively. The 1st XI Division 3 would consist of twelve teams which would honour the CCL promotions earned in 2021 with the standard twenty-two game season in that division. At the end of the season three teams would be relegated with only one side promoted leaving the division with twelve teams for the 2023 season onwards. Again 2nd XI cricket would be unaffected with four divisions of twelve teams, with promotion and relegation of two teams from each of them.

Assessment of the Proposed Changes

Quite clearly for the clubs in the fourteen team League there would be the burden of additional fixtures to contend with for one season, which some clubs might feel onerous. We are minded to resolve this issue within a single playing season; hence the decision to 'promote 1 & relegate 3' from the expanded 1st XI Division 2, and to 'promote 1 & relegate 3' from the new 1st XI Division 3 in order to effect this plan by the end of next season. Additionally, our umpiring resources would be strained and would need to be expanded to cope with the additional league fixtures.

On the plus side, for those clubs that have teams currently due to play in our 1st or 2nd XI Division 2 it makes the much-feared risk of relegation from the County League a far more distant prospect with the additional division acting as a buffer zone.

It gives another twelve clubs the prospect of playing under the County League banner whilst improving the geographical spread with most of the incoming clubs being based in central Cheshire. Many of these clubs are well known to CCCL clubs with seven of the clubs having played in 1st XI CCCL cricket in the past.

Most importantly though, it would resolve the issue that threatens to blight Cheshire Cricket for quite some time affecting relations between clubs and potential legal action.

Conclusion

We will be arranging that the forthcoming Management Meeting is in part converted to an SGM where we would seek approval from the clubs. We have enjoyed your full support in the past and we appreciate that support. We sincerely hope you back your committee in this matter, but it is of course your choice. For the proposal to go ahead it will also need to be passed separately by the clubs in membership of the CCL. If any of you wish to discuss any aspect of this proposal then please feel free to contact any of the Executive members (David Humpage, Ray Hunt, Brian Boys and Duncan Anderson), in order to allay any worries you may have or just to discuss it in more detail.

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