

OFFICIATING MATTERS

#YESITDOES

NOVEMBER 2024 EDITION

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

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And finally....

Hi everyone.

Well, the improvement in the weather that we usually see at the end of the cricket season certainly didn't arrive this year, though there has been a slight upturn recently, even if you can't quite call it an Indian Summer....

Anyway, a few things to report/touch on as we enter November:

A constructive and positive meeting was held with the ECB Officiating team along with our counterparts from Wiltshire and Wales. The good news is that, as an ACO, there should be minimal changes other than the financial resources coming through our County Board which, thanks to our blossoming relationship with Steve Silk and the GCF is a definite positive.

There are other changes required - to training courses and content/CPD, etc and there are certainly some 'holes' in the plans and processes, but we have made the Officiating Department fully aware of these, so it's a case of 'watch this space' for future developments. Bob has produced a more detailed overview of this in the following pages.

Discipline – sadly, still far too many incidents leading to reports and disciplinary hearings. I even sat on an appeal hearing for a neighbouring ACO where the original 'events' had led to SEVEN players being reported! It is good though, that as officials, we are clamping down and reporting ill-discipline and we need to continue driving reporting as a team to attempt to stop this endemic affecting the game we all love.

End-of-season get-together/social evening – this has been arranged for Wednesday November 20th at Stroud CC (junction 13 of the M5). Please confirm attendance with either myself or John Lingley as soon as possible so we can pass on details to the caterers. In 2025, we will be looking to organize a more formal event and are seeking an organizing sub-committee to take care of the arrangements – I have already received interest from two parties to take on this role, so thank you from the GACO committee.

Winter well and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the social evening and AGM in February 2025. In the meantime, enjoy this jam-packed edition of Officiating Matters #YesItDoes.

Phil



CRICKET OFFICIATING – THE FUTURE



The ECB Officiating Department has recently completed a programme of nationwide consultation meetings with ACOs regarding the future governance of recreational officiating. Several members of the GACO committee, including President Clive Poulton and Chairman Phil Mattingley, along with Les Clemenson (who wears several different hats), attended the meeting in

Bristol last month to hear the ECB's thoughts on how this might look moving forward and together with other ACO members from Wiltshire and South Wales, give their thoughts on the ECB proposals.

At this moment in time, there is a limited amount of concrete information to share with members, as feedback from ACOs across the country needs to be correlated and considered before a detailed way forward can be plotted.

The need for change has come about largely due to the need to increase the number of active umpires and scorers across the land and be able to formally communicate with everyone who officiates (or as many of those people as possible), including club scorers and umpires and those who stand/score in youth games, for example, as well as many other forms of cricket. We can then look to provide development opportunities for even more officials in order to help improve standards across the board.

In short:

Recruit – more people to attend umpiring & scoring courses.

Convert - more course attendees into active officials.

Develop – all officials to be the best umpire/scorer they can be and

Retain – officials for longer periods.

The number of umpires & scorers operating in Gloucestershire has, over the last few years, remained relatively healthy compared to some parts of the country, though the overall, national trend is very clearly a downward one.

What will happen, almost certainly from the start of next season (or before), is that the responsibility for recruiting and converting officials will rest with the County Cricket Boards or, in the case of Gloucestershire, the GCF. The rationale behind this is that volunteer bodies (ACOs) can't be held responsible for the levels of recruitment and conversion, whereas paid personnel can. ACOs will be involved in the development and retention of officials and the practical organization of umpires and scorers (eg appointments).



The relationship between CCBs and ACOs across the country is varied to say the least, so it's good to know that the connection between GACO and the GCF is a very positive one. Indeed, Gloucestershire was one of four counties to be selected for the 2023/24 ECB pilot to look at how County

Boards and ACOs can work together effectively and for the benefit of all. This resulted in, amongst other things, the GCF playing a lead role in organizing the 2024 ECB umpire courses in the county – sourcing venues, advertising events, correlating correspondence, etc – utilizing its systems and paid personnel to help facilitate everything and this worked very well.

The ECB is proposing that scoring has a separate organizational / management structure at County, Regional and National levels. Should this happen, officers will be elected at every level and work in partnership with ECB staff who will be accountable for any final decisions. ECB believes that having a separate structure would allow for more effective discussion and decision-making at committee level and more focussed attention being given to scoring and scorers.

Few people disagree with the overall rationale behind the proposed changes; after all, professional bodies with greater resources and paid personnel should be in a better position to deliver the required results on a sustainable basis nationally, rather than volunteer bodies which differ greatly in what they can offer, but as will always be the case at this point in proceedings, people are unsure as to the practicalities of the changes or of the reality of the way forward. This is not to say that these practicalities will be unworkable or wrong, just that at this present time, no-one knows what they are going to look like or how they are going to work, so we should not speculate on future outcomes.

The summary of what these changes are likely to mean for County ACOs is:

- a. A need to work collaboratively with CCBs/Foundations, particularly when agreeing retention and development plans. These would be funded by the ECB via the CCBs/Foundations, rather than funding coming directly to the ACOs.
- b. No obvious changes to retention and development programmes and activities e.g. delivery of CPD, hosting development meetings, deploying developers.
- c. No material changes to current roles and responsibilities, but a need for ACOs to look at the effectiveness of their working practices – something all organisations should be doing anyway, regardless of these new initiatives.

One thing was made very clear at the meeting GACO attended (and no doubt at the other meetings around the country) and it is that ACOs will still have a key role to play in facilitating recreational umpiring and scoring and the GCF has reiterated this. And with the current healthy relationship enjoyed by GACO and the Gloucestershire Cricket Foundation, it is hoped that, in practice moving forward, most things will continue in pretty much the same way as is already the case.



PANEL UMPIRE ALLOCATIONS 2025

2025 Panel Offers



Letters from Allan Taylor (WEPL Umpiring Panel Chair) have been sent out by the various County ACOs to all of last season's WEPL Premier 1, Premier 2 and Development Panel umpires, together with those officials who are being offered Development Panel places for 2025. People receiving offers of a WEPL panel place should reply to Allan Taylor (with Les Clemenson and their CDO copied in) by the end of January. It should be noted that the minimum availability required for Premier 1 umpires is now 14 of the 18 Saturdays, while there are no travel restrictions available for this panel.

Non-WEPL panel umpires not receiving letters will, in 2025, be officiating in the same tier as 2024.

2024 Feedback

With Captains' Marks based around several different criteria having been available to umpires throughout the season, feedback has been ongoing for those people who have consulted them. In addition, all observation reports have been shared with umpires following BEDOs and CDOs taking place.

Captains' Marks: 2024

As in the past 12 years, captains' marks have been analysed and in addition to the raw score, compared to both the captains' average score for a win/lose game and to the mark of their colleague. Interestingly, the 'colleague criterium' makes surprisingly little difference to the final comparative table, whether used or not.

Premier 1: 2025

Borrowing best practice from a number of other sports, for 2025 a pod system will be introduced for P1. The concept of umpires operating in small groups (pods) stems from a belief that if officials work together more often as 'teams', they will deliver more consistent (and better) performances.

The top 24 umpires in 2024 (as identified from captains' reports, etc) have been split into 6 pods of 4. These 6 pods will be used for all P1 games and, as the season unfolds, for key matches in P2, with four of the pods being used slightly more in P1 than the other two.

Umpire Grades

Those umpires that applied for 'promotion' to the next grade have been informed as to whether or not they have been successful with this application, either as part of their WEPL letter or separately. Moving to the next grade does not necessarily mean elevation to the next tier of officiating, it simply means you are able to do so should the opportunity arise.

NOVEMBER 'Around Britain' QUIZ

1. The famous tree that adorned Kent CCC's ground at Canterbury until 2005 was:
A. Oak B. Willow C. Lime D. Ash
2. The Valley of the Rocks cricket ground is situated in which county:
A. Dorset B. Cornwall C. Devon D. Somerset
3. St Just CC is situated close to which well-known promontory:
A. Portland Bill B. Land's End C. Spurn Head D. Worm's Head
4. Which cricket festival is held at North Marine Road:
A. Scarborough B. Durham C. Guildford D. Cheltenham
5. What is England's most northerly cricket ground:
A. Solway Park B. Pier Field C. Cheviot View D. Tyne Park

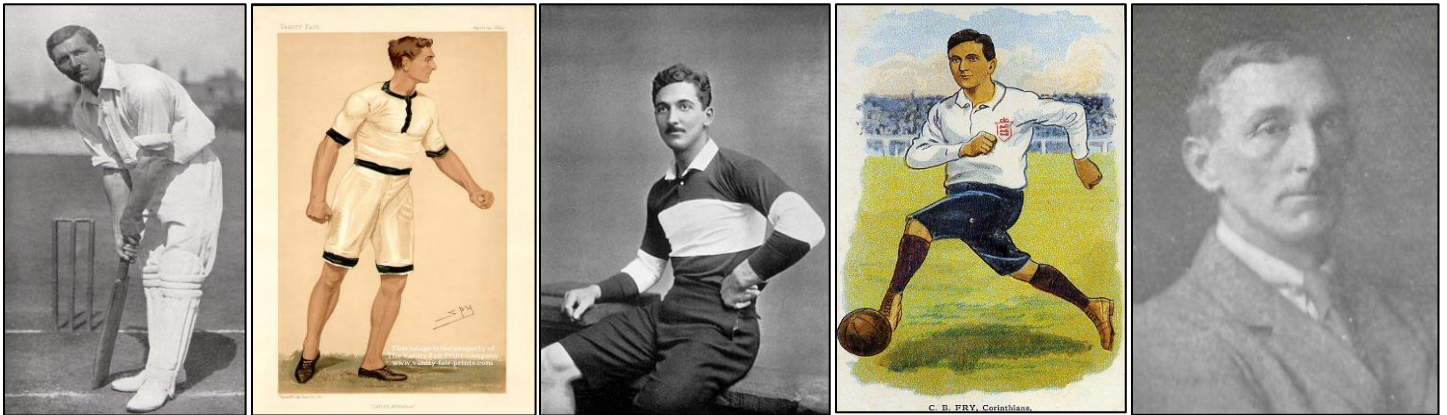


6. The Lightning Stand is located at the test match ground with which postcode:
A. B5 7QU B. DH3 3QR C. DE21 6DA D. M16 0P
7. Jack Leach played (and still occasionally does) for which WEPL club:
A. Taunton Deane B. Bridgwater C. Taunton St Andrews D. Ilminster
8. Dumbleton lost to Foxton Granta in the 2024 Village Cup Final at Lord's. But to which university city is Foxton Granta closest:
A. Oxford B. Cambridge C. Loughborough D. Leeds
9. Brislington CC is situated on which lane:
A. Blacksmith's Lane B. Horseshoe Lane C. Ironmould Lane D. Steelworks Lane
10. Cavaliers & Carrington CC won which ECB Premier League in 2024:
A. Nottinghamshire B. Northamptonshire C. Durham D. Kent

CRICKETING ODDITIES

C.B. Fry was indeed one of the greatest sportsmen of his day and probably one of the greatest sportspeople ever. He played almost 400 first-class matches for Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire as a top-order batter and medium-pace bowler, winning 26 England caps along the way. He played in the FA Cup for Corinthian Casuals at the age of 16 and in the FA Cup Final itself for Southampton as well as winning a full England cap.

Fry excelled at many athletic disciplines, with the long jump, high jump, hurdling and sprinting being at the forefront of many national achievements. For a time in the late 1890s, he actually held the world long jump record. While injury curtailed his rugby career early, it didn't happen before he'd made three appearances for the Barbarians.



Outside sport, Fry was a well-known journalist and active politician and writer who, in the 1920s, was approached to become King of Albania, a position it is claimed he turned down due to having 'too many other things to do.' This itinerary included publishing his own magazine, meeting Adolf Hitler and eventually featuring in an early edition of 'This Is Your Life'.

Fry's fame, however, lasted long after retiring from professional sport. His party trick was to leap from a stationary position on the floor backwards onto a mantelpiece. He would face the mantelpiece, crouch down, take a leap upwards, turn in the air, and bow to the gallery with his feet firmly planted on the shelf, a manoeuvre he continued to perform well into his seventies. C.B. Fry – without doubt, one of the greatest sportspersons ever.

CRICKETING INITIALS

Okay, so most people have heard of C.B. Fry. But what do the initials 'C.B' stand for? And what do the abbreviations of these 9 other properly initialed players stand for:

Bronze Award

(a) I.T. Botham (b) S.K. Warne (c) W.G. Grace (d) B.C. Lara.

Silver Award

(a) I.V.A. Richards (b) K.W.R. Fletcher (c) A.P.E. Knott (d) R.G.D. Willis.

Gold Award

Only one - W.P.U.J.C. Vaas.

Answers on Page 16.

Expense Claims and Payment for Appointments Summer 2024

The latest round of expense payments covering the second half of the season, which ran from the beginning of July to the end of September, was made just over a fortnight ago (18th October).

These payments were primarily for non-league matches, but included some 'catch-ups' as late claims were eventually submitted.

There are still several people however, who have not submitted any claim at all this season.

If you have not yet submitted a claim, either for League or Non-League appointments, you will not have received expenses for matches where you officiated.

Up-to-date information on the situation can be found on the GACO website on the Documentation / Expenses and Reimbursements page which also includes the link to the GACO claim form - <https://www.gaco.org.uk/expenses-claim-form/>

GACO END of SEASON SOCIAL

This will be held at Stroud CC (Cullimore Ground, Ryeford Industrial Estate; GL10-2LA) on Wednesday 20th November, commencing at 7.00pm and finishing around 9.30. All umpires and scorers past & present are invited.



Please inform either Phil Mattingley or John Lindley of your attendance and any dietary requirements by no later than **Wednesday 13th November** to enable us to confirm numbers with the caterers.

QUERIES and CONTACTS

Should you have any queries regarding your officiating role, please contact the appropriate person from the list below.

GACO COMMITTEE CONTACTS 2024/25

Post	Name	E-Mail	Post	Name	E-Mail
Chairman	Phil Mattingley	chair@gaco.org.uk	Development	Bob Owen	development@gaco.org.uk
Secretary	Rishi Maktedar	secretary@gaco.org.uk	Education & Development Coordinator	Andrew Davis	edanddev@gaco.org.uk
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Scorers	Sue Drinkwater	scorers@gaco.org.uk	GCF	Gareth Dawson	Gareth.dawson@gloucestershirecricketfoundation.org
Education	Bob Hampshire	education@gaco.org.uk	Publicity & Webmaster	Craig Blakeway	webmaster@gaco.org.uk

SCORING MATTERS #YesItDoes with SUE DRINKWATER

Scoring a Men's International by Mark Wiltshire



This season I was fortunate to be offered the opportunity to score the England v Australia ODI at Bristol. The forecast was not good for the day, so fingers were very tightly crossed that we got a complete match in. The one thing I didn't expect to be a problem was gaining access to the ground as my accreditation pass didn't work. Once eventually in though, it suddenly hit me how big an event these games are - there were literally hundreds

of off-field staff scattered around the stadium.

I carried out my usual pre-match routine and was finally ready for the toss. This is where I noticed that this was no ordinary match; there was no communication with either the umpires or the teams and the toss was taken from Sky TV. Once the match started, the first thing I noticed was there were no pre-signals from the umpires, which was something I was not used to.

Then the dreaded review for a stumping. I had practised this at home, but this was now live with a reasonable chunk of the world watching. Again, with no communication from the umpire, the review had to be taken from the TV.

Sadly, the match was rain-affected and eventually curtailed, but I had a great day at Bristol though and huge thanks to Adrian Bull and Mike Turner for guiding me through it.



Duckworth Lewis Stern (DLS) update (or lack of)

The DLS software is updated constantly with information from white-ball cricket being played across the world to ensure that the algorithms contained within it reflect the current pattern of runs/wickets in limited-over cricket. The updated DLS software is normally re-issued for use in October/November on a two-year basis, with the next expected release at any time now. However, Professor Steven Stern (the 'S' in DLS), having completed this year's annual analysis of results, has confirmed that overall things have not changed dramatically and has recommended that DLS Professional v5 (issued in 2022) be used for another year.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) who own the rights to the DLS software have accepted this proposal, so there will be no update to DLS in 2024 and DLS Professional v5 should remain in use for the UK's 2025 season.

Leagues who use DL Standard don't need to worry about software updates as the match data supporting DL Standard was frozen in 2003, when DLS Professional was first published.

Play-Cricket Scorer Pro (PCS Pro) Updates

Despite the 2024 cricket season being done and dusted, the PCS Pro scoring software continues to be updated on a regular basis, with most updates expected in autumn and late spring in order to avoid the main scoring seasons in both northern and southern hemispheres.

PCS Pro is designed for scoring in the professional game and includes many features that don't affect the visible scoring interface (e.g. video analysis and iHawk data), but all PCS Pro updates must be done sequentially (before the next update is released), regardless of what content is being updated.

It's a good idea to regularly open your PCS Pro software during the winter and perform any updates when they happen, rather than wait until the start of next season. If you miss a couple of updates, you will need to uninstall PCS Pro and re-install to get the latest version containing all the missed updates.

There was a large update on 1st October 2024 (but nothing visible for scorers), which you may not have noticed as it was after the end of our season.

To update PCS Pro, open the application but look carefully at the login box which will warn you that you are not using the latest version of the software. Click on the 'Check for Updates' link in the login dialog box to launch the 'New Version Available' dialog box, then click the 'Install Now' button to download and complete the update.



Tier 3 Scoring Report

Amongst the ten clubs in WEPL Gloucestershire this season, two do not have a regular scorer, and one is about to lose their regular scorer at the end of the season. For Premier League cricket, this isn't an ideal state of affairs. All the non-regular scorers however, were using the PCS App, so there was always an electronic scoring option for each match, even if it was not necessarily compatible with their colleague's platform of choice.

Of those clubs with regular scorers, all were using PCS Pro, though only two others were using any form of paper back-up - both in the form of a box book, with no-one else using the Linear system.

Interestingly, there were only three clubs in the division where there was a permanent, dedicated scorers' position, despite some clubs having recently re-built their pavilion! The most common alternative was using tables or benches on a balcony or terrace, albeit with adequate sun/rain protection by means of an overhanging roof or gazebo.

Firsts in VISUALLY IMPAIRED CRICKET

My first experience of umpiring VI cricket, by Phil Davison

I must admit, I didn't know what to expect when I signed up to do VI cricket this season.



To be honest, I was a bit apprehensive, but excited all the same as I like to put myself under a bit of pressure to keep the grey cells challenged!

Unlike red ball cricket, there are some slightly different rules and regulations, and the equipment is a bit different, too. The balls have 'stuff' inside them so the players can hear them coming – (I say 'stuff', because I have no idea what IS inside – all I know is it does the job and helps the players hear where the ball is!) and the stumps and bails are fixed on a plinth

as one whole piece of equipment.

The players' ability to see are mixed, from those being completely blind – AKA 'the Totals', to those with partial vision, like tunnel vision, for example. Every player must wear coloured wristbands so that they can be identified as to their level of blindness. This is important for the umpires because the same rule can be applied differently, depending on the degree of blindness. For example, bowling to a 'Total', the ball must bounce at least twice before getting to the popping crease, but it only has to bounce once for a player with mid-partial sight. And I have to say, everyone is acutely aware of what's going on and if you get it wrong – especially the fine edges!

Yes, the teams are just as competitive as anyone else, but it is great fun as well. The players are so appreciative for enabling them to play cricket, and they really show it. I've found it absolutely inspiring, and humbling, to umpire these games this summer and I really can't wait for next season to start again.

My first experience of scoring VI cricket, by Penny Taylor

After a couple of weather-related false starts, I was really pleased to be able to sit alongside expert Paul Toplis on Sunday 25th August, to be introduced to the intricacies of scoring VI cricket.

The Gloucestershire Growlers v the Birmingham Stars game was held at Hatherley & Reddings CC's lovely South Park ground on a rather chilly and very windy afternoon! The game took some time to get going, which was a bonus for the scorers,

who had to ensure that the players and their correct sight categorisations were entered on Play-Cricket.

Having been a scorer for some 57 years (since I was 19!), for club and representative cricket at Senior and U14s levels, it was fascinating to see the tremendous levels of skill and enthusiasm generated by both teams, in spite of the very challenging weather! With two national BCEW players in their side, the Birmingham Stars were, by far, the stronger side. This did not though, diminish the tremendous effort that the Gloucestershire Growlers maintained throughout and the great and friendly spirit in which the game was played.

The rules are clearly much more complicated than the cricket I am used to scoring and it was reassuring to understand how the mix of different levels of sight ability ensures as level a playing field as possible. I shall be doing some serious homework in the off-season in order to better understand all the details of the rules so that I can hopefully come and score a VI game again next year.

One thing for certain is that I take my hat off to everyone involved in VI cricket - players and officials alike, who all clearly put so much hard work into cricket to ensure that players with sight disadvantages can play at such an impressive level. Fully-sighted players have much to learn from how much the VI cricketers put into and get out of our lovely game and the courtesy and great spirit in which they play.

I look forward to meeting everyone again and wish you all a happy and healthy off-season and good fortune and success for your cricket in 2025.

P.S. Have you ever thought of arranging fixtures in which sighted players could wear glasses that would create sight disadvantage? I used to run a Hydrotherapy and Physiotherapy Centre for people with disabilities and we had a most interesting and successful Awareness Day, where local councillors and managers of neighbouring health facilities were persuaded to work for a day wearing glasses that created different types of sight issues.

*Birmingham Stars 244-5 (N.Khan 53no, H.Ali 51); Gloucestershire Growlers 91-4.
Match drawn.*



4Tunes to the Oh, Sweet Caroline by Chris Fortune

For many who read this article, I understand that music in sport is, was and never will be an acceptable part of our beautiful game. Certainly, when I began my time in officiating, music was a definite no-no. It was all about the tranquility of leather against wood and the competition it generated. I never guessed that some years later, I would be at the forefront of choosing music to play in front of a potential audience of 14,000+ roaring fans!

Now for me, I respect that music in cricket is not for everyone and I respect that there is a format where music should never even be considered. Nonetheless, I would like to tell my story of how it all began and what has happened since - the fun times, the exciting times and the not-so-good times. The laughter amongst friends, and that of verbal attacks that I have formally endured. Of course, it also only seems right that as I write this article, we can proudly state that we, Gloucestershire CCC, are the Vitality T20 Champions!

But back to the beginning. I was not a DJ and never suggested I was that person, but my music journey started when my club, Nailsea, reached the quarter final stage of the NatWest U19 T20 competition and they asked if I could do a little music for the game; merely because I had a sound system. From here, my entire involvement in cricket turned down a different path when the Gloucestershire Cricket Foundation asked whether I would play the music in their U19s T20 finals day at The Seat Unique stadium. Even though the event was only hosting 60-70 people, it was a huge honour and is something for which I will forever be in the debt of the GCF as the next invitation took me beyond my wildest dreams.

Peter Hall was the Operations Manager at Gloucestershire CCC and in 2017 he invited me to take up a position within the club as their audio engineer. I explained that I was not a DJ, but merely good at pressing 'Play' at the right time. Peter said: 'Chris, you may not be a DJ, but you understand cricket and you understand our supporters. I can't pay you, but you will be a part of the Gloucestershire family.' I was blown away and without a moment's thought, immediately said: 'Absolutely!'

2019 was my first year of being offered some sort of payment. Peter had retired and the club had hired a chap called Pierre. What a year that was! Pierre told me he had hired a marquee for me to sit in during the T20 Blast, which I was a little concerned about as I explained that I was self-sufficient. Nonetheless, Pierre was immensely supportive of the role that I performed and wanted to ensure that I had a strong structure to sit in. Due to the temporary seating, I was situated near the family stand where the marquee company had accidentally drilled through one of the floodlight cables, leaving me with a huge trench in front of the marquee to contend with.



This was also the year of the ICC World Cup and arguably the most memorable year that I have ever been involved in cricket. Here in Bristol, we were unlucky with the weather, but for the first time I had the privilege of visiting and working at grounds that I would never ever have considered working at. From Gloucestershire to Edgbaston, from The Ageas Bowl to Lord's, it was truly a 'Village Green to the Test Arena' experience. The campaign was challenging as we would have a 'load in' day before the event itself and then have the game the day after. Travelling the country following the game I love was a dream come true, but it was lonely, too. Sitting in hotels during the evenings or, more accurately, sitting in hotel bars on your own was both mentally challenging and exhausting, with late nights and early hours.



Returning to Bristol, people often ask where my favourite ground is. This for me is an easy answer. There are grounds that I love going to, while many grounds have their own differing challenges, but The Seat Unique has a special kind of crowd. A crowd that most definitely likes their Sweet Caroline, that encompasses the atmosphere of T20 Cricket and fully understands the ups and downs of Gloucestershire CCC.

There is nothing louder than our local fixture against Somerset. With our friend Ben Peverall standing at the Ashley Down Road end, it was a big fixture for him and likewise, it was always going to be my highlight of the year. With a man running across the pitch in a dress alongside a Captain Pugwash lookalike - sometimes you need to just smile at some of the antics that go on. This fixture didn't start in the best of ways for Gloucestershire as we were losing wickets in the early part of the second innings. With 'YMCA' and 'Hey Jude' roaring to our 14,000 punters, it was always going to go to the very end. Ollie Price was simply sensational as the crowd erupted to 'Freed' from Desire and we beat our West Country rivals for the first time in many seasons.

The Cheltenham Festival is always an interesting place to visit. It is steeped in history and is one of the most beautiful settings to host the professional game. Until this year, I never really understood the work that goes into making this festival work and didn't recognise the fact that GCCC effectively changes the landscape of a field into a multi-purpose festival setting. As mentioned, every venue has its unique challenges and for those who are engineers themselves, you will know what challenges there can be with many different lengths of cable being used. Last year comes to mind as Cheltenham had a number of new groundstaff working around the arena and well, let's just say they were not as careful as they perhaps should have been whilst sitting on their lawnmowers.

This season saw a couple of firsts for me. Ben dropped me a call to ask whether I would do music for the Metro Bank One Day Cup. 'For the One Day Internationals?' I asked. 'Yes I do, but typically not for the County format of the game.' Ben told me that Dan Pedley was going to get in touch with me. Dan is a good friend of mine from Leicestershire and a National Panel umpire. Dan contacted me within a few minutes to inform me that his club at Kibworth had been awarded a One Day Cup game, Leicestershire vs Surrey, and they would like me to play music for them during this fixture. I told Austen, our Operations Manager at GCCC who said: 'You can do that? Do you want to do the same for us in our One Day Cup matches?' 'Absolutely!' I agreed, with the biggest of smiles spreading across my face.



The trip to Leicestershire is a magical memory for me. I established that not only was I to be the 'Music Man', but I was also to be the grounds announcer (typically called the 'Voice of God' in our field). The news that Graeme Thorpe had sadly died was coming through and I knew that we had to do something special to remember him. We had to do Surrey proud, and the pressure had ramped up into unknown territory for me. I was given a script by the head of the commercial team from Leicestershire. I felt every tremor when my body started shaking as I saw some of the world's greatest cricketers line up in front of the pavilion. What would I do if the sound system failed? What would I do if I stumbled on my words? 'I haven't had the time to practice this,' were some of the thoughts tumbling through my mind. Alec Stewart looked up at me as I opened with: 'If you are able, please be upstanding...' Time appeared to stand still as I took a deep breath to offer the first gratitude for a record-breaking career to a man who the cricketing family loved and appreciated during every step of his cricketing journey.

Returning to Bristol, I was on a high. Visiting Kibworth Cricket Club was special for me. I knew I was not a natural 'Voice of God', but I was comfortable in ensuring that I did the role to the best of my ability. It was time to think about Gloucestershire's One Day Cup campaign and how music was going to appear during the match.

As I mentioned earlier in this piece, music is not for everybody, but Gloucestershire wanted to reinforce their approach by ensuring that we, as a club, were inclusive of everyone. The message was clear that families were welcome into our club and that, atmosphere-wise, we could challenge The Hundred. More to the point, the players said that they would love to have music within this format of the game.

Our first game in the One Day Cup was not a good one. Not only did we lose, but everything that could have gone wrong at the club did. Earlier in the season, our ageing scoreboard had decided to totally give up which meant a rapid plan was needed. It was then fed back that a number of complaints had been received regarding the music; I can wholeheartedly promise that I listen to every element of feedback to consider what we do next, so I asked Alan Payne whether he could go to our Premier Members for their thoughts. Knowing full well that this was going to be a bumpy ride, I wanted to approach the group that I thought would likely be my worst critic. To my absolute surprise, it was a 50/50 response. Yes, some told me that they did not want music and it did not have a place in the one-day game, but on the other hand, there were those who said that they loved it.

What was special was that I had a knock on my gazebo door from a gentleman who was in his early 70s. My thoughts were: 'Oh, no. Here we go!' To my surprise, he came up to thank me for everything that I was doing and told me that he would like to provide me with a list of tracks that he would like played in the next game. He wrote a lovely letter to the club, too, which stated:

Chris,

I just want to express my thanks for your indulgence of me and others with the music selections at the recent 50-over games. I know that music can be a little divisive and it's "not cricket" as we know it. However, you did not attempt to blast everyone's eardrums, so I am sure that was much appreciated by the spectators.

I did e-mail Neil but I have not had any response, perhaps he felt it was not necessary. Hopefully you will be back next season entertaining us again. Enjoy the rest of the summer and take care till then.

Yours

Tony

PS – I'm sure you will also be doffing a cap to Shania tomorrow for her birthday.

What a letter! This man was an all-out cricket enthusiast and completely committed to his beloved Gloucestershire, and here was I, playing music in a controversial format. As it turned out, Tony was a huge Shania Twain fan and it made me laugh as he asked for the song, 'Man! I feel like a woman', to be played at the next game.



My upbeat feedback was short-lived however, as in our next fixture we had a new 'Voice of God' who had joined me in the gazebo. Our operation is within a restricted area, but I appreciate that not everyone is going to be like Tony. A gentleman came into our part of the ground and instantly started questioning our new announcer: 'Who is responsible for this noise?' The announcer looked somewhat perplexed, informing the complainant that the responsible person was sitting next to him. The rage I faced was disappointing; this individual was completely set in his opinions, but I suddenly recalled a time when I worked at an international and the person I worked for gave me a bit of very good advice: 'Kill them with kindness.'

The complainant told me how unhappy he was and stated: 'I have been around the ground and spoken to every single person and no one wants you here!' I apologised profusely and went with the approach of trying to 'kill him with kindness.' 'I am truly sorry, sir and would like to do something to help your experiences.' I even gave him another line that was recommended to me, which was: 'I am hired to do a job, but please let me help you in making your complaint and you can have my name to support you with this.' Kindness was not working very well as he was making his point and ensuring he could play with my emotions, thus making me feel utterly terrible about the job I did. I reflected on how powerful some people's words can be in making you feel horrible about yourself. This was an all-time low for me, and I felt so incredibly down about the words he had used. The verbal punches I took made me feel so small and incredibly deflated, but thinking back to Tony's letter made life feel much better.

Following the One Day Cup, our thoughts turned to our upcoming international at Bristol. Along with members of the ECB, we were all reflecting on our 2024 year and agreed that you wouldn't have bet your mortgage on Gloucestershire becoming T20 Vitality Blast Champions. In fact, you wouldn't have put a tenner on them winning. Our year has been tumultuous at best, as we have experienced several challenges along the way; from the scoreboard giving up, to the abandonment of the Championship game for an unsafe pitch, to challenges within our own ranks. Nonetheless, winning the T20 was special, it was indeed the (very) Sweet of 'Oh, Sweet Caroline!'





As winter approaches, our attention turns to the annual Fireworks display and Celestial Drones. I will have the honour of working alongside Matt Lucas, which I do not doubt will be very special. Cricket with or without music is special; our community is special and I have so much to thank the Cricket Foundation for. I started as this young umpire who just loved cricket to playing music on the world stage. Thank you so much to the GCF and everyone that has helped and supported me throughout this amazing experience.

ECB UMPIRING COURSES



Two courses have currently been arranged:

Sunday 24th November at Gloucestershire University – this is fully booked with 20 people enrolled.

Sunday 16th March at Hartpury University which has places still available.

Updates on further winter umpiring and scoring courses will be included in future editions of Officiating Matters.

GACO CRICKET CALENDAR

Those spanking new 2025 diaries will soon be arriving, nestled in the bottom of your Santa sack. So here are a couple of dates to write ever so neatly on their pristine pages, together with a couple of others to scrawl in your by-now tatty old 2024 one.

Wednesday 20 th November	GACO Social	Stroud CC
Sunday 24 th November	ECB Umpire Course	Gloucestershire University
Thursday 27 th February	GACO AGM	The Ship, Alveston
Sunday 16 th March	WEPL Umpires' Meeting	BAWA Club
	ECB Umpire Course	Hartpury University

CRICKETING INITIALS Answers

Charles Burgess Fry.

Bronze Award: (a) Ian Terence Botham (b) Shane Keith Warne (c) William Gilbert Grace (d) Brian Charles Lara.

Silver Award: (a) Isaac Vivian Alexander Richards (b) Keith William Robert Fletcher (c) Alan Phillip Eric Knott (d) Robert George Dylan Willis.

Gold Award: Warnakulasuriya Patabendige Ushantha Joseph Chaminda Vaas (!)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Umpire **John Wheeler** falls under this month's *Officiating Matters* spotlight.

Position in GACO	Umpire
Profession – now or previously	Now retired – previously worked for Lloyds Bank for 37 years
For how long have you umpired/scored?	Since 1999 – 26 seasons
Main cricket team played for / associated with	Clevedon (when sons were playing there)
Role in that team (eg opening bat)	Parent!
Favourite ever cricketer	Basil d'Oliveira (and what a joy it's been to meet his son Damian (no longer with us sadly) and umpire his grandson, Brett!)



What is your favourite sporting moment?	March 1969 when Swindon Town won the League Cup.
If you could learn a skill instantly, what would it be?	Speak Spanish
Saturday night: Go home or go out?	Go home

Name three things other than cricket that you enjoy doing.	Playing keyboard in a church service, travelling and spending time with family.
Name three things you really don't like.	Shopping, swimming and rain.

What were your best & worst subjects at school?	Best – maths; Worst – art.
Describe your favourite meal	Thai red chicken curry.
Create a 3-item meal that you really wouldn't like	Liver, onions & cabbage.
If you were to write a book, what would it be about?	Faith.
Three words to describe yourself.	Organised, consistent & reliable.
What is your favourite saying/quote/mantra?	There's nothing you can do to make God love you more; there's nothing you can do to make God love you less!

What is your 'nightmare' scenario?	Car breaks down <i>en route</i> to important game – and there is no mobile phone signal!
If you were stranded on a desert island, which three things would you like to have with you?	My bible, the family photograph album & a Swiss army pen-knife.

Greatest sportsperson ever	Sir Bobby Charlton.
Greatest invention ever	The PC.
Greatest band ever	The Beatles.
Greatest ever film or musical	The Constant Gardener.

If you could meet one person in the world, who would it be and why?	Barack Obama – because I was so very impressed with him when he was US President.
What are/were your hopes for the 2025 cricket season?	Sunshine, good cricket, fewer umpiring errors and less unacceptable behaviour!

AND FINALLYWHAT'S YOUR DECISION?



In a closely-contested WEPL Women's fixture in which the batting side need two runs to win with two balls and one wicket remaining, the bowler pitches one short to the No 11, but the surprised batter manages to duck out of the way. In the process of doing so however, the batter's helmet, already loose, falls off and lands on top of the stumps, with both bails falling to the ground. The fielding side celebrates a close-fought victory, but the batter stands at the crease unmoved. What is your decision?

September's Conundrum

In a WEPL Premier 1 fixture outside the Gloucestershire boundary, a legal ball is bowled. The delivery hits the batsman on the boot outside the line of leg stump, bounces up and is hit for six over deep midwicket. What do you do, if anything?

The striker has no right to deliberately hit the ball after it has come off their boot. So, if you believe it was a deliberate act, call and signal dead ball and do not award any runs to the batting side. You should, though, award five penalty runs to the fielding side for obstruction. The ball will not count in the over.

QUIZ Answers

1. A (lime tree)
2. C (Devon)
3. B (Land's End)
4. A (Scarborough)
5. B (Pier Field is home to Berwick CC)
6. D (M16 0P – Old Trafford)
7. A (Taunton Deane)
8. B (Cambridge)
9. C (Ironmould Lane)
10. A (Nottinghamshire).

OM (November 2024) Contributors

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We hope you've enjoyed this edition of 'Officiating Matters' and thank-you to all our contributors. If you have anything that you think might be of interest to our ever-growing readership, please email development@gaco.org.uk with your offering.



Gloucestershire Association
of Cricket Officials