OFFICIATING MATTERS

#YESITDOES

Gloucestershire Association of Cricket Officials

MAY 2026 EDITION

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Hi everyone,

At last, the 'on field' season is here and I have been very fortunate to have already officiated in a number of fixtures (both friendlies and cup competitions) at the very picturesque and always welcoming Dumbleton CC.

We were playing on the top part of the square nearest the pavilion with 1st XI scorer, Slim Catto's dog, Bruce, earning his rewards by being gainfully employed jumping into the stunning looking (and pretty large) pond behind the pavilion to fetch back the balls hit into there for six with a 100% success rate.

It wouldn't be England without weather conditions affecting cricket and in Week 2 (mid-April) we had a 30-minute interruption for a hail storm!

Talking about picturesque, I have a request on behalf of the Officiating Matters team in that it is your publication and we would love to receive more correspondence and content from yourselves with your own photographs (if possible) to share with our ever-growing group of readers. This could be personal items/pictures that you feel would be of interest to others, interesting events that you have witnessed or been a part of either on or off field or things of more general interest. Whatever it is, please don't be shy in coming forward.

Go well and enjoy your early-season in whatever capacity you are cricketing.

I look forward to catching up with you at the various social and CPD events to be held during the season with details to be found in Officiating Matters, the GACO website (gaco.org.uk) and social media platforms.

Phil

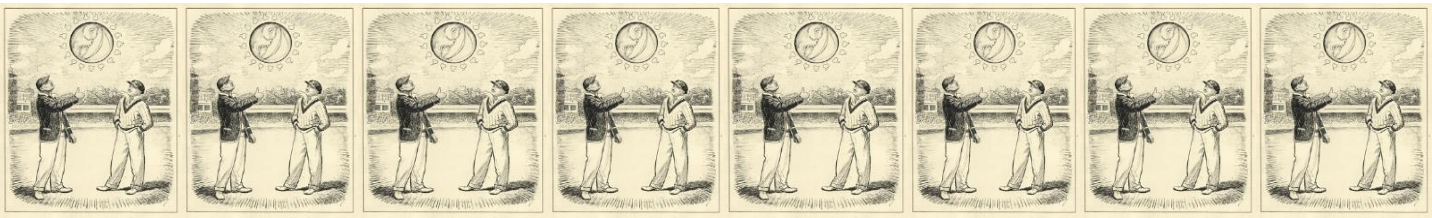
The PRESIDENT'S PITCH

GACO President, Clive Poulton, looks at the importance of meeting people prior to the game.

Pre–Toss or Pre–Loss?

One clear message that came through to me at the first umpiring course I attended was the importance of the pre-toss meeting between the officials and the captains ahead of the game. It's the "curtain up" to the proceedings, so to speak. To my mind, the pre-toss meeting offers the opportunity to set the scene and build a constructive understanding and mutual expectations through open discussion between the officials and captains.

However, that can't be all there is to it, can it? Creating a positive atmosphere ahead of the match includes several separate priorities for consideration. At the recent GACO Bi-Annual Conference at Eastwood Park on 15th March, I was struck with the input given by First Class umpire Ben Peverell and prominent scorers, Malcolm Doody and Mike Turner. In many ways their comments coincided, including the importance of pre-match discussions as a vital part of preparation and positive influencing opportunities for the officiating team.



Bear with me as I attempt to summarise some of the key points. On arrival at the ground, be aware that our presence will be noticed! Therefore, after placing our kit in the changing room or the scorebox/scorer area as appropriate, who should we look to meet?

If your officiating colleagues have just arrived it's good to greet them, whether we know them or whether this is the first time we have met. With umpiring colleagues, conversations will take place during the pitch inspection, familiarity with the ground and tolerance levels, planning who will cover what at the pre-toss meeting, etc. It's so important for a good rapport to be established between the umpires and scorers, emphasising the commitment to teamwork, including are we using radios today?

Are members of the ground staff present? These are people who will know the ground back to front. On cloudy days when there is the possibility of interruptions for rain, where does the weather normally come from? If required, is sawdust available and who, if

necessary, will be available to handle the covers and re-mark the pitch? To my mind, it pays to spend time with ground staff, particularly if they are protective of the ground and the work they have undertaken to keep everything in good shape!

Our conference also confirmed other key people to meet and greet. These include the captains, coaches, Club Chairs (if present), club officials and probably as important as anyone, the caterers! It's a no-brainer with the caterers, where we look forward to good food and the flexibility in catering arrangements, should a change in the timing of the match proves necessary.

When we have run training courses in GACO for new umpires and scorers in the past, we have always emphasised the importance of thorough planning and preparation. This has included revising our knowledge of the competition regulations, journey planning, perhaps a conversation with our colleague ahead of the day, making sure that all our kit is on board and in some situations knowing whether tea will be provided.

I remember attending a training course in industry early in my career, when the lead consultant was focussing on the importance of planning and preparation. One illustration he used was the mass of an iceberg, where two-thirds of the structure was below the waterline and not visible, the point being that what others see in our personal image, self- confidence and performance on the day is underpinned by thorough planning and preparation. Although the planning stage takes time, it's a good investment. New officials will tend to be more aware of this but as they become more experienced, this investment becomes more routine.

So, thinking about the stages ahead of match day and before the pre-toss on the day and irrespective of our experience level: "Are we ready to call play?" Simply, will it be pre-toss confidence and enjoyment to come, or pre-loss and a lost opportunity?

We have the control as to how we demonstrate our approach to preparation and the consequential impact on others, and the decision whether it's pre-toss or pre-loss is very much up to us.

GACO CALENDAR

Saturday 2nd May	League season begins	Various
Wednesday 6th May	Club Intro Course	Upton St Leonards CC
Monday 11th May	Club Intro Course	Whitminster CC
Thursday 4th June	CPD Session (1)	The Ship, Alveston (7-9pm)
Thursday 16th July	CPD Session (2)	The Ship, Alveston (7-9pm)

WORLD CUP WINNERS – AGAIN!

England Over-70s, captained by WEPL umpire, John Evans (Frocester CC), retained the Seniors' World Cup after defeating old rivals Australia in a very tight final at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch, New Zealand, by 15 runs.

The victory followed on from the team winning the Silver Ashes 3-0 on the other side of the Tasman Sea in the fortnight prior to the World Cup and across the two competitions, the side won 14 out of 15 games played in a little over five weeks, a schedule that would have tested players 40 years their junior!

In both photos, Evo is in the centre, with his hands firmly on the silverware!

UMPIRE DEVELOPMENT

Several pre-season events have taken place since the last edition of OM found its way into people's Inboxes.

A very interesting and informative conference at Eastwood Park and the WEPL pre-season seminar at BAWA both took place in March, while pre-season, online meetings for the Boundary Edge Observers and umpire mentors were held in April.

The 'Are You Ready to Call Play?' practical day for new umpires took place at Hatherley & Reddings CC three weeks ago, while Club Intro Courses have been held at Poulton CC, Ruardean Hill CC and Cheltenham CC over the past couple of weeks. Two more club courses at Upton St Leonards CC and Whitminster CC are scheduled for the next fortnight. In Bristol, two courses for youth coaches were held at Frenchay CC and these, along with the other club courses, were very well received.

ECB Umpire Courses and Umpire Development Courses will restart in the autumn – details will be posted on gaco.org.uk and in future editions of Officiating Matters.

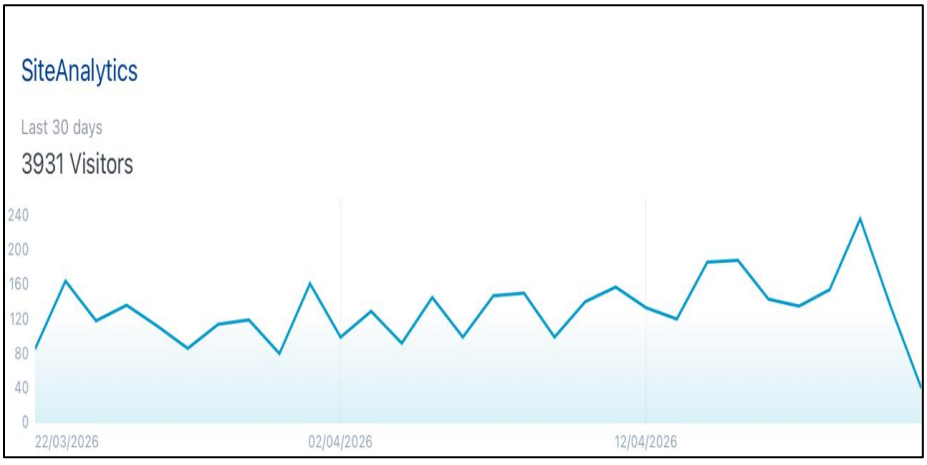
Observations are an integral part of umpire development and we're very pleased that Alan Payne, David Parry-Jones, Jonathan Labrum, John Wheeler and Chris Coleman have joined current stalwarts, Steve Dove, Clive Poulton and Ian McHardie-Jones on the BEDO team, with a couple of other additions in the offing.

While priority is given to ECB Umpire Assessments and recently-qualified officials, the BEDO team hopes to observe as many umpires as possible over the course of the season. In addition, and following on from their P1 observations last summer, Les Clemenson and Bob Hampshire are looking to extend their schedule to P2 umpires this time around. The 2026 start date for BEDOs is Saturday 9th May.

Finally, two dates to add to your diary. On Thursday 4th June and Thursday 16th July, Bob Hampshire will be leading CPD sessions at The Ship Inn, Alveston, 7.00-9.00pm, the topics for discussion to be shared closer the time.

GACO WEBSITE

The new GACO website is proving very popular with both current and prospective officials, the latest analytics showing gaco.org.uk received nearly 4,000 visits over the past three months.



MONEY MATTERS by John Lindley

Appointment expenses

First of all, thank-you to people who have submitted regular and timely claims for the Indoor League competitions, they are a great help.
Sadly, the problem of reconciling claims with what actually happened on any particular evening result in the delay to payments. Yet again, the cause of the problem arises simply from the claims that are submitted becoming either self-inflicted delays or delaying payment to colleagues.

Just a few examples of the issues are:

- Duplicate claims
- Incorrect match dates
- Missing or conflicting information on claims
- Too many people claiming for the same role for the same fixture
- Different colleague references when more than one umpire was appointe,
- etc…, etc…..!

So, when then trying to reconcile with the reality of "who-did-what-and-when", in addition to the questions that have to be answered to address the basic claim errors:

- On nights when both matches were conceded, were the officials advised in advance or did they only find out once they had travelled to the venue
- etc…, etc…..!

To put these issues into context, between the Gloucester and Cheltenham Indoor Leagues this past season there are queries, conflicts or missing information for 58 of the 116 claimed match days!

Added to this, the problem of no easily accessible record to enable a check of what actually happened via a different route means there are no instant answers to resolve those queries.

The requirement for regular and timely submission of claims for appointment expenses is there for a reason. The reason, as highlighted above, does not change. Please bear this in mind for the upcoming outdoor season.

GACO ONLINE SHOP

Gloucestershire Association of Cricket Officials

The GACO shop, which can be accessed via gaco.org.uk (or use the link below) is up and running ready to do business prior to the new season. Order any item from the shop, which comes complete with GACO logo and have your item(s) delivered directly to your door. Everything from match clothing to leisurewear – check it out now:

Clothing and merchandise – GACO

2026 GACO CONFERENCE

There were nearly 60 attendees at the bi-annual conference at Eastwood Park on 15th March with the four very different presentations being well received by all.

Professional umpire Ben Peverall kicked things off with his journey from lower league cricketer to the WEPL Panel to officiating at Lord's. President Clive Poulton followed up by interviewing Malcolm Doody and Mike Turner, who've just been appointed to the GACO Lead Scorer Developer and Lead Scorer Appointer roles in regard to the new Scorers' Pathway and their own scoring journeys.

The usual excellent Eastwood Park lunch was followed by a presentation by Richard Glynne-Jones, Umpire Manager at the ECB in which he gave an insight into the workings of the Professional Umpires Team and the importance of ACOs in the management and development of recreational officiating. Finally, Bob Hampshire presented the first CPD session of 2026 which, given the current climatic variations, appropriately dealt with procedures for dealing with Ground, Weather & Light issues.

A big thank you is offered to John Lindley & Phil Mattingley, who between them spent many hours/days organizing the event, all our speakers for giving up their Sunday to make their presentations and respond to questions from the floor, Eastwood Park for hosting and everyone who came along on the day.

SCORING MATTERS #YesItDoes

Scorer Education with Sue Drinkwater

Welcome to new GACO Scorer Members

Following the launch of the new ECB Scorer Pathway, GACO would like to say a warm welcome to the following five new scorer members:

Alison Burt, David Pinnock, Izzy Sherrington-Lodge, Wendy Skyrme & Richard Slade.

GACO Scorer Training

Over the last few months, GACO has offered the full range of Scoring Courses and can report a good turnout of scorers keen to update their skills ahead of the new season.

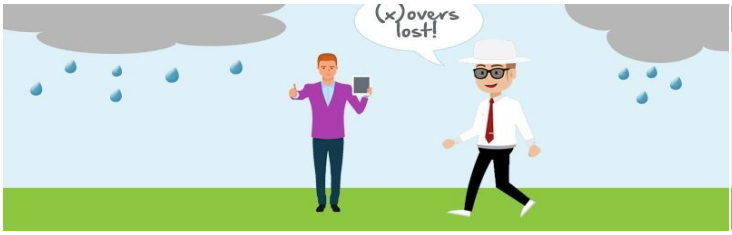
Course	Venue	Number attended
Scoring Techniques	Stroud CC	13
Duckworth Lewis Stern	Hatherley & Reddings CC	12
Play-Cricket Scorer Professional	Stroud CC	9

Linear Scoring	Thornbury CC	6
Statistics	Thornbury CC	7
Intro to scoring/PCS app	Bristol WI Phoenix CC	3

Thank you to the venues for supporting our scorer training and to all those who helped out on the courses.

Duckworth-Lewis Stern

A reminder to all scorers that a new version of DLS Professional (v6) is available in both PCS Pro (on laptops) and the PCS app (on smartphones/tablets) and should be used during the 2026 season for leagues which use the professional version. Please check your competition regulations to confirm which version you should be using. It's also worth checking in your early matches that the correct version of DLS has been set in your league fixtures.



Please check your own regulations/playing conditions but a quick look at the various leagues/competitions in Gloucestershire suggests the following:

- WEPL Men – DLS Professional v6.
- WEPL Women (Premier League) – DL Standard with a G50 of 200.
- WEPL Open Age Group T20 – DL Standard with a G50 of 245.
- B&D League – DLS Professional - version not specified so I would assume the latest (v6).
- B&D T20 – does not use DLS – uses highest run rate.
- GCL – DL Standard but does not specify a G50.
- Gloucestershire County Cup – DLS but does not specify Professional or Standard.
- Gloucestershire County Trophy – DLS but does not specify Professional or Standard.

Scorer development with Malcolm Doody

Firstly, congratulations to Sam Mullally and Alison Burt, who have both successfully progressed from S5 to S4 ahead of the 2026 season. Both are experienced scorers and have already submitted Expressions of Interest to progress further to S3. They are now concentrating on building their portfolios of evidence to meet the required criteria for progression, and are joined by a number of other GACO scorers who are actively working towards their next level.

If you are looking to progress during the 2026 season, please ensure you complete and return the Scorer Expression of Interest for Progression Form: https://resources.ecb.co.uk/ecb/document/2026/02/27/fe991f93-8a46-4e98-844c-712b4bb96fb9/APPENDIX-C_Scorer-Expression-of-Interest-for-Promotion-2026_FINAL.docx

Mentoring - Supporting Our Scorers

A key priority for the coming season is the development of a structured mentoring approach. Our aspiration is simple: to ensure that every newly qualified scorer - and indeed any scorer who would value additional support - has access to a named mentor.

Mentoring does not need to be an onerous commitment. At its heart, it is about being a supportive and approachable contact: someone who can offer guidance, answer questions, or simply act as a sounding board after a match.

To make this a success, we are looking for:

- Experienced scorers willing to volunteer as mentors
- Scorers (new or existing) who would like to be paired with a mentor

Mentor training will be available, and mentors will form part of a small, supportive network as we establish this initiative. This is a great way of "giving back" and helping to develop the next generation of scorers.

Progression Discussions - Building the Next Stage

Alongside mentoring, we are strengthening our approach to Progression Discussions (PDs). These are a vital step in the development pathway, led by qualified observers who work with candidates to review their portfolios and determine readiness for progression - or identify areas for further development.

We are looking to expand our team of PD observers and would welcome expressions of interest from scorers who would like to be trained for this role.

Get Involved

Whether you are:

- Interested in becoming a mentor
- Looking to be supported by a mentor
- Keen to join the Progression Discussion observer team
- Considering progression and need to submit a Scorer Expression of Interest for Promotion Form
- Or simply want to learn more about scorer development opportunities

please get in touch via scorer.development@gaco.org.uk.

Your involvement will play an important part in strengthening our scoring community and supporting the continued development of officials across GACO.

GACO COMMITTEE

There have been a number of recent queries regarding who members should contact for information about a wide variety of officiating matters.

Below is the full list of GACO committee members, their contact email and an overview of their role. Should you have an umpiring or scoring query of any description, please try to locate the appropriate person to contact as this will mean your question is answered as quickly as possible.

GACO COMMITTEE CONTACTS & RESPONSIBILITIES 2026/27

Post	Name	E-Mail	Post	Name	E-Mail
Chairman	Phil Mattingley	chair@gaco.org.uk	Umpire Development	Bob Owen	umpire.development@gaco.org.uk
Oversees the GACO operation.			Umpire training, observations & umpire pathway advancement.		
Secretary	Andrew Davis	secretary@gaco.org.uk	Web Development	Rishi Maktedar	webdev@gaco.org.uk
Secretarial matters and event venues.			Website development, updates and social media.		
Treasurer	John Lindley	treasurer@gaco.org.uk	Umpire Recruitment	Darren Turl	umpire.recruitment@gaco.org.uk
All things financial, membership & DBS.			Recruitment of new umpires and umpire mentoring.		
Umpire Appointments	Steve Johnson	umpire.appointments@gaco.org.uk	Umpire Education	Bob Hampshire	umpire.education@gaco.org.uk
Leading a team of 6 umpire appointers responsible for all types of matches in Gloucestershire.			Umpire education provision including CPD and National Panel umpire assessments.		
County Lead Scorer (Education)	Sue Drinkwater	scorer.education@gaco.org.uk	County Lead Scorer (Development)	Malcolm Doody	scorer.development@gaco.org.uk
Scorer education provision, including CPD.			Scorer development, mentoring and scorer pathway advancement.		
County Lead Scorer (Appointments)	Mike Turner	scorer.appointments@gaco.org.uk	GCF	Nicky Clarke	Nicky.clarke@gloucestershirecricketfoundation.org
Scorer appointments for Gloucestershire.			Training course organisation and liaison between GACO & GCF.		
Welfare Officer	Robin Scott	welfare@gaco.org.uk	Please note that umpire/scorer email addresses are now prefaced by umpire or scorer to differentiate between the two.		

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CRICKET FOUNDATION NEWS
with Nicky Clarke

The cricket season is once again upon us. We've had a busy winter educating new umpires and scorers and getting WEPL scorers ready to use DLS. The uptake on the DLS courses across the WEPL area has been encouraging and shows the importance of working collaboratively with our neighbouring ACOs and local leagues. Collectively, we have supported 58 scorers across 39 WEPL clubs with DLS training.

Our Get into Cricketers are busy completing the online Scoring and Umpire Education courses ahead of the season ahead of opportunities to support at their clubs and with GCF events across the summer.

Hopefully, we will have enough interest so we can deliver an ECB Umpiring Course specifically for 14-18-year olds next winter and that Sue will have lots of young scorers looking to move up through the new pathway.

The benefit of the online courses is that they are ECB-recognised qualifications and that GACO can contact people directly about upcoming training opportunities and appointments.

We've barely played a recreational game yet, but it won't be long before we start planning the next officiating courses in Gloucestershire. Having started part way through last season and as such learning the ropes, I wasn't as proactive as I would have liked to have been, so I'm hoping that we can arrange courses in October and November this year to capture the enthusiasm driven by the T20 Women's World Cup. This will include courses specifically for our young volunteers and for our diverse communities as well as our normal education offering.

Good luck to all our officials for the 2026 season. Please do share any good news stories and accomplishments with us on social media so we can start to showcase the amazing officials we have in Gloucestershire.

Gloucestershire Association of Cricket Officials

INDOOR CRICKET with Jim Hyland

As we look forward to the summer ahead, here's a quick round-up of the end of the winter indoor season.

After winning the Gloucestershire play-off finals, Cheltenham took on the challenge of the Regional Finals – playing for a place in the National Finals at Lord's. They duly beat Neyland (Wales) in the semi-final to set up a final against Waterlooville CC (Hampshire).

Waterlooville batted first scoring 95 (Dan Birch 57 not out), Stefan Hunt with two wickets. In reply, Cheltenham struggled and while Andy Hawkins (22) & Brian Riddle (25) fought hard, they fell 20 runs short with the Hampshire side qualified for National Final.

A Day Out at Lord's (29th March 2026)

I was invited to be part of the officiating team at this year's National Indoor 6s Finals Day, held at the indoor cricket centre at Lord's.

An early arrival was rewarded with an opportunity to have a walk around in an almost deserted home of cricket. Just me, a groundsman with a mower and a beautiful sunny March morning.

As expected, the indoor facilities were outstanding and bigger than most - eight batting lanes wide, a playing area 25% longer than the norm, solid walls were replaced with tensioned nets on all four sides with space beyond. A large viewing gallery above contributed to a feeling of space, unusual for indoor cricket. The floor was of a tight-knit "astro type" which provided assistance for the bowlers, lots of bounce and exaggerated movement, both seam and turn – it wouldn't fare too well with the WEPL pitch-marking criteria and as a consequence all matches were low scoring.

With my colleagues, Vikash Amin (Essex) and Simon Parbery (Cambridgeshire), we had a good look around and the Middlesex coaching staff took time to familiarise us with the venue. Then, over a cup of tea we discussed different scenarios, tolerance levels, playing regs, shared experiences, etc and reached an understanding of how we would manage the day. Along with excellent club scorers we formed a good team for the day which was supported by strong captains.

The cricket was excellent – fast, competitive, it had an edge to it and was all played in the right spirit.

I was appointed to stand in the first semi and the final.

The 1st semi-final featured two clubs reaching this stage of the competition for the first time - Waterlooville (Hampshire) 43/0 beating AK XI (Cambridgeshire) 42 all out.

The 2nd semi-final was a repeat of last year's final with both teams having a rich history that includes several national indoor titles between them in recent years. Whitstable won last time and were once again victorious, winning this one with more ease than was expected - Whitstable (Kent) 92/5 beating Ockbrook & Borrowash (Derbyshire) 57 all out by 35 runs.

In the final, the ball very much held sway again - Waterlooville`s opening bowling took early control - veteran campaigner Jon Hudson bowled Whitstable captain Daniel Pilbeam first ball which set the tone. Joseph Mitchell removed Stuart Drakeley in the next over and a couple of run outs later saw the defending champions shell-shocked at 14/4.

Young Henry Goss (55) recovered the situation, making the only notable contribution with the bat, and clever support from Will Cook (12) plus good running between the wickets saw them and reach a respectable 79 all out.

In reply, Waterlooville showed no big match nerves, and with a proud father watching on as scorer, the Reynolds brothers, captain Archie & younger brother Ray set up victory with a 30-run opening stand. Charlie Whitfield (22), Dan Birch (9) & Jon Hudson (10) finished the job with 8 balls to spare to see the national trophy coming to the South West for the first time in a while.

FROM PASTIME TO PRO

After working his way up through B&D and WEPL, local official Sam Hollingshead has just begun his first season as a professional umpire. Here, Sam charts his journey from the dark days of the Tin Shed to the heady heights of the first-class game.

'If you practise hard enough Sam, you'll be out in the middle one day,' my father would always say. I think he meant as a player, but perhaps he realised early on that I wouldn't quite become the next Ian Botham!

My umpiring started after a few years of making up the numbers in adult cricket, opening the batting and quickly returning to the Pavilion (or Tin Shed), after which I was usually umpiring for the remainder of my team's innings. As we all know, there are certain individuals who will do anything to get out of going out to the middle with the white coat on, standing behind the stumps and counting to 6 for 10 overs or so. I, however, found it kept me engaged in a game that I would have otherwise been a helpless spectator, as I'd usually just been bowled by an absolute seed (aka I'd left a straight one) whilst batting.

As all club cricketers who do not have neutral umpires are aware, LBWs have to be plum if they're going to be given. However, I lost the respect of a few of my teammates for what they, in their opinion, called a questionable decision or two (they might not have been plum, but they were still out).

The official move to umpiring from playing came as a result of one club Second XI fixture. In a very finely poised match, I was fielding at mid-on (one of the places the captain often tried to hide me) and their best batter chipped one up. I, with a solid base, hands ready, Ozzy-style and absolutely sure there was no way of dropping such an easy chance, I shelled it. It went through my hands, hit me in the face and trickled to the ground two feet in front of me. With that, the Veteran Second X1 captain exhaled and roared: 'You should take up f*****g umpiring, at least then you wouldn't f**k up a sitter like that' – what a catalyst that man proved to be in my cricketing life.

As the season came to an end, I undertook my Level 1 Umpiring course at the County Ground in Bristol and the following season I would turn from a mediocre 2nd XI / 3rd XI 'cricketer' to an umpire.

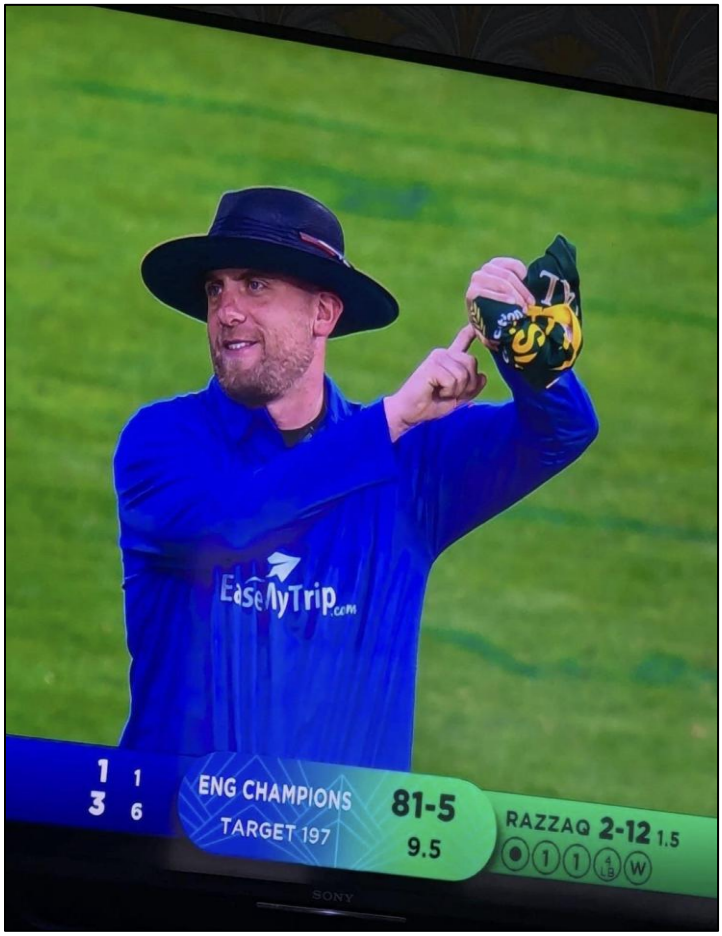
I remember my first official game as an appointed umpire well; it was a Bristol and District Cricket Association Division Two appointment between Coalpit Heath and Lodway Cricket Club. I was nervous, but not nerves like I had experienced during my short playing 'career'. I did not have to worry about the bowler being too quick, running my team mate out, dropping a dolly or that the teas I had prepared would be stale and dry. I was nervous because I was no longer a player doing 'his stint in the middle', I was now the judge, jury and executioner of 22 players for the next 7 hours or so; teams and players who I had never seen or met before. Throughout the day's play I would work with my colleague to ensure that we facilitated the game to the best of our ability. I remember the first decision I gave - the opening batsman walking across and in front of all three and thinking: 'F**k me, where have all the stumps gone?!' and raising my finger for the first time as an appointed umpire.

The day in its entirety could not have gone much better and the game went quickly; before I knew it, both captains had bought me a pint and were quick to explain how they had both thought beforehand: 'He's a bit young to be umpiring, isn't he?' but their doubts had quickly passed as the game went on. To be out in the middle, to go about the match quietly but effectively and to be at times a spectator of the game I'd loved for years, was where I wanted to be for a very long time to come.Since that very first outing, I have loved being out in the middle as a neutral with my colleague chatting to the batters, bowlers and fielders, understanding their troubles and ensuring the game runs as smoothly as possible and is the spectacle the players and crowd look forward to during the week (weather permitting!).

I have been lucky enough to advance through the West of England Premier League and have had some appointments to games I never would have dreamed of when I started umpiring. I am experiencing the wonders of the long-standing game; the raw pace of the fast 'angry' opening bowlers to the tactility and resilience of the spinners, the prowess

and caressing of the ball from the opening batters to the tailender who has one shot in their locker - to put the ball as far over the trees as they can. I truly do have the best position on the field.

At the start of my time as a recreational umpire, it was great travelling to various clubs around the South West. The new grounds, players, captains and colleagues allowed me to develop as an official and as an individual, to communicate effectively and back that up with solid decision-making.



The support from GACO was very useful, too. Observations from developers, colleagues and scorers allowed me to identify strengths and weaknesses and implement processes and techniques to help with each match of cricket and the high-pressure situations. I was also lucky enough to benefit from appointments to national age group tournaments through the Young Official's Pathway at the start of my umpiring journey.

I've been fortunate in my umpiring career for the support provided by the ACO, Developers and colleagues. I've always been open to suggestions and digested feedback accordingly and taken the relevant points forward to develop my role in facilitating cricket matches. None more so than my mentor, Peter (Oggy) Ogborne who was always 'happy' to hear from me after a match and discuss all the things I thought I did well, allowing me to pick his brains on ways to improve.

After two and half seasons of Premier One cricket, I was selected to join the National Panel (M2). This brought new challenges and new experiences through National Counties cricket, Second X1 fixtures and Women's cricket. After several trips to counties in the south of England and doing well at each match, I was offered some List A Metro Bank One Day Cup fixtures at Cheltenham, Canterbury, Taunton and Southampton in the 2024 season. These matches were the fiesta experience of Professional 1st X1 Cricket and working with a Match Referee was another addition to my support and progress.

2025 was a big year on my umpiring journey as I was asked to officiate the World Championship of Cricket Legends, the retired international superstars playing T20 cricket, a fiesta which was televised internationally. This was a challenge for me to comprehend initially but was successfully navigated (there are lots of additional aspects to televised cricket). The highlight of the tournament was umpiring India v Pakistan Legends in front of a full house at Edgbaston (I couldn't hear anything!)

More Metro Bank and Legends fixtures + National Counties + Second XI finals day in 2025 allowed me to work with new teams, colleagues and Match Referees and rely on my processes to ensure my focus was always on the next delivery. Always discussing decisions and performances with those who had helped me from the early days (Oggy, Bob Hampshire, Les Clemenson) as well as those in the Professional Game and ECB management team to ensure I was hitting, and surpassing, expected standards in the professional arena.

I applied for the role on the Professional Umpires' Team in early 2026 and after a successful application and interview was presented with the opportunity to turn a hobby into my full-time job. I am very optimistic about the 2026 season but will continue to review and develop my officiating; the hard work does not stop here and I look forward to new grounds, competitions and meeting different stakeholders.

On my days off, I intend to meet up with colleagues and clubs in WEPL and the feeder leagues to catch up and enjoy the recreational game again – but this time from the sideline!

THE WEST OF ENGLAND PYRAMID 2026

Premier One (Tier 1 – M3)

Bridgwater, Bedminster, Bristol, Thornbury, Burbage & Easton Royal, Bath, Frocester, Potterne, Midsomer Norton & Dumbleton.

Premier Two (Tier 2 – M4)

WEPL Gloucestershire/Wiltshire Division

Cheltenham, Corsham, Chipping Sodbury, Hatherley & Reddings, Goatacre, Wootton Bassett, Marshfield, Tewkesbury, Purton & Painswick.

WEPL Bristol/Somerset Division

Congresbury, Clevedon, Downend, Lansdown, Golden Hill, Taunton St Andrews, Taunton Deane; Weston-super-Mare, Old Bristolians Westbury & Twyford House.

Tier 3 – M4

WEPL Bristol & North-East Somerset Division

Bedminster II, Bristol West Indians Phoenix, Bath II, Bristol II, Bristol Pakistanis, Frenchay, Downend II, Brislington, Bishopston & Knowle.

WEPL Gloucestershire Division

Aston Ingham, Cheltenham II, Bourton Vale, Stroud, Charlton Kings, Hawkesbury Upton, Gloucester, Chipping Campden, Corse & Staunton & Langford.

WEPL Somerset Division

Ilminster, Taunton, North Perrott, Chard, Wellington, Frome, Temple Cloud, Wembdon, Yeovil & Bridgwater II.

WEPL Wiltshire Division

Corsham II, Westbury, Hinton Charterhouse, Burbage II, Avebury, Swindon, Trowbridge, Chippenham, Warminster & Potterne II.

Tier 4 – M5

Bristol & District Senior Division

Winterbourne, Pak Bristolians, Portishead, Coalpit Heath, Bristol II, Bradley Stoke, Golden Hill II, Stapleton, Midsomer Norton II & Whitchurch.

Gloucestershire Cricket League Division One

Apperley, Cirencester, Cheltenham Civil Service, Poulton, Lydney, Frocester II, Rockhampton, Thornbury II, Tewkesbury II & Tetbury.

START-OF-SEASON QUIZ

Test your knowledge of the West of England Premier League with Craig Blakeway's excellent quiz (Answers on P24).

1. Rearrange the letters to reveal a WEPL Team
   a. OLD BUN MET
   b. SHAM FIELD R
   c. THE LAMENCH
   d. YOUTH OF DOWERS

2. Answer the cryptic clues to find a WEPL Team.

   a. Village near Bristol where Duke possesses finish.

   b. Bristol suburb that's precious on a slope.

   c. Aches surround small Gloucestershire village.

   d. Church found amid conflict in Wiltshire town.

3. Which team will Goatacre have to travel the furthest to play in WEPL 2?

4. Which WEPL Prem 2 local derby game is less than 3 miles apart?

5. Dumbleton will have to travel to Bridgewater CC this season, but how many miles will the round trip be?
   a. 172
   b. 152
   c. 182

6. How many teams are there in the 2026 WEPL Women's Premier Division?
   a.10 b.11 c. 12.

7. Who is the main sponsor of WEPL Cricket?

8. There are 8 Second XI teams in the WEPL. Can you name 3 of them?

9. Which team finished top of WEPL 2 Bristol/Somerset in 2025 and which team finished bottom?

10. In what year did WEPL begin?

    a. 1997 b.1999 c.2001.

CRICKETING ODDITIES

Those of you who have been members of GACO for more than a few years will harbour fond memories of our fabulous former secretary, Peter Sawyer, who now lives in Cranbrook, Kent and is currently spending several afternoons a week at the local bowls club.

Well, back in the day, and long before he'd entertained any thoughts on becoming an umpire, Secretary Sawyer (SS) was a decent cricketer in his own right, turning out on a regular basis for Surrey 2nd XI.

On one occasion, having been selected for a three-day game against Hampshire, he and three other Surrey players suggested to the club that they would prefer to be billeted in a local hotel, rather than make the daily trek to and from Basingstoke, where the game was to be played.

The Surrey admin staff duly played ball and confirmed the two-night hotel booking, much to the glee of the fab four, who could now look forward to enjoying a couple of nights of luxury as well as maybe indulging in a post-cricket tipple or three.

Day one was a rain-affected affair with only about twenty overs possible, but it was notable for the future international umpire, John Holder, bowling a pretty lively opening spell for the hosts.

Once play was finally curtailed for the day, SS and the three other Surrey places left the ground, eventually locating their hotel down a dodgy-looking side street close to the town centre. Safe to say, it didn't look like the salubrious establishment they were hoping for.

The Surrey party, in addition to SS, consisted of Bill Higginson, the captain, an amateur player who was managing director of the children's adventure holiday company PGL, Geoff Howarth, who would go on to play for and captain New Zealand and Trevor Chappell, the Australian cricketer who would find future fame of a different sort in the Land of the Long White Cloud. The intrepid foursome were welcomed into their 'hotel' (at best, even by Basingstoke standards, a low-end B & B) and shown to their 'Family' room, at which point all four pairs of eyes immediately took in the fact that not only were they all in together, but far more worryingly, there were only two single beds, the other being a double.

Bill, as captain, immediately pulled rank and claimed the first single bed, while Geoff was the highest profile player in the group, so swiftly nailed his colours to the mast of the second single, leaving Trevor and SS with the double. Neither player was too happy with

this arrangement, so Peter stuck a bolster down the middle of the bed to keep them apart during the night.

If only he'd known then about Trevor's liking for underarm shenanigans, he might have thought twice about how effective this barricade would be, but thankfully for the future GACO secretary, the night passed off without any real alarms.

Even so, neither of the 'double bedders' was particularly enthused about spending another night together, as they knew the chances of dislodging Bill and Geoff from their positions of single-bed security were limited to say the least, but salvation was at hand. They all arrived at the ground the next morning with the rain continuing to lash down and it wasn't too long before the umpires had had enough and, with the playing surface now resembling a rather deep lake, the game was abandoned, much to the obvious relief of at least two of the Surrey players.

UMPIRES – It's the start of a new season.

Have you:

Updated WTU in regard to your availability AND amended it if your availability has changed?

Ensured that your clothing still fits after the excesses of the winter and is it whole if it's been loitering alongside the odd mouse or two in the loft?

Checked your kit and equipment? Have you got enough bowlers' and team cards and up-to-date directive cards? Is all your equipment still in your bag? I'm sure I put the spare clicker in there at the end of last season…

Read through and noted any changes to the regulations of the early-season competitions in which you'll be standing? And have you re-familiarised yourself with the regs that haven't changed?

Umpired a pre-season friendly or stood in the nets 'to get your eye in?'

Located the expenses form you're going to complete and submit at the end of each month?

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GACO Umpire and Over-70s Ashes Winner / World Cup Winning Captain, John Evans, falls under this month's *Officiating Matters* spotlight.

Position in GACO	**Umpire**
Profession – now or previously	**Teacher**
For how long have you umpired/scored?	**4 years officially, but lots as a teacher.**
Main cricket team played for / associated with	**Frocester**
Role in that team (eg opening bat)	**Retired captain & Chairman**
Favourite ever cricketer	**Desmond Haynes – such a great bloke.**

What is your favourite sporting moment?	**Equally, captaining Frocester at Lord's and England Over 70s to World Cup wins at Wormsley Park & Hagley Oval.**
If you could learn a skill instantly, what would it be?	**Cooking**
Saturday night: Go home or go out?	**These days at home!**

Name three things other than cricket that you enjoy doing.	**Travel, golf & music.**
Name three things you really don't like.	**Prejudice of any type, corrupt politicians who are in it for themselves and not to make the world a better place and TV soaps.**

What were your best & worst subjects at school?	**PE & Physics**
Describe your favourite meal	**Sea food paella**
Create a 3-item meal that you really wouldn't like	**Cheese fondue, sweet potato and bread & butter pudding.**
If you were to write a book, what would it be about?	**A History of Sports**
Three words to describe yourself.	**Sociable, enthusiastic and competitive**
What is your favourite saying/quote/mantra?	**Practice Makes Permanent**

What is your 'nightmare' scenario?	**Feeling out of control**
If you were stranded on a desert island, which three things would you like to have with you?	**A fishing rod, a spear and a saucepan (would hate to go hungry).**

Greatest sportsperson ever	**Don Bradman**
Greatest invention ever	**The wheel**
Greatest band ever	**Fleetwood Mac (all versions)**
Greatest ever film or musical	**Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid**

If you could meet one person in the world, who would it be and why?	**Too late, but Nelson Mandela, to ask how he could be so forgiving.**
What are your hopes for the 2026 cricket season?	**To still enjoy playing Seniors Cricket and to continue improving as an umpire.**

AND FINALLY ……WHAT'S YOUR DECISION?

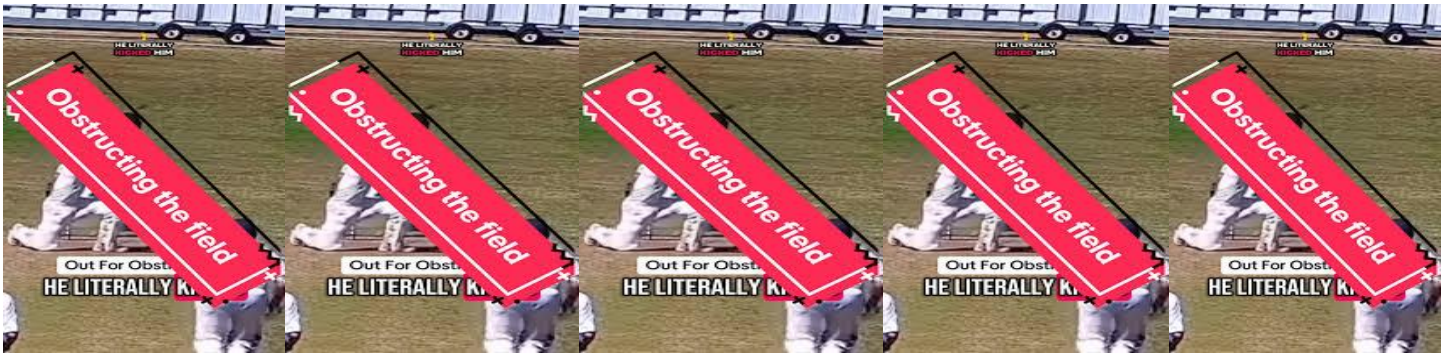
In which of the following four scenarios is the striker likely to be given out for obstructing the field:

The striker blocks the ball before picking it up and giving it back to the bowler.

The striker blocks the ball but is horrified to see it rolling back towards their stumps. In an effort to prevent it hitting the wicket, the batter kicks the ball away and it trickles to gully.

The striker pushes the ball to short cover, then sets off on a quick run, sprinting up the off side of the pitch. Short cover fields, throws at the stumps and the batter would likely have been run out had the ball not struck the inside of his left leg.

The striker hits the ball in the air and just as mid-off closes in on an easy catch, the non-striker shouts 'drop it' very loudly.



March's Conundrum

It's the first Saturday of the season in the B & D Senior Division and the home side has won the toss. The opening batters descend the sparkling white concrete stairs which have been lovingly painted only a fortnight before and cross the boundary rope, only for the heavens to open just as they arrive in the middle.

Both batters and fielders hurtle to the shelter of the pavilion/bar. After 45 minutes the rain ceases, the ground staff get to work and just over an hour (and a couple of pints of Poretti) later, the fielding side take to the field for a second time.

As the opening pair arrive in the middle however, the fielding captain notices that both batters are different players to those who marched out nearly two hours previously. You are standing at Striker's End when the captain informs you of the change in personnel.

What do you do?

Answer: *The game doesn't begin until the umpire calls 'Play' and the bowler begins their run-up, so in this situation the batting side is entitled to change the order. What you should do is explain the rule to the fielding captain, then get on with the game.*

QUIZ Answers

1. Dumbleton, Marshfield, Cheltenham & Twyford House.
2. Downend, Golden Hill, Painswick & Warminster.
3. Tewkesbury.
4. Cheltenham and Hatherley & Reddings.
5. 152-mile round trip.
6. 11 teams.
7. Neon.
8. Bedminster, Cheltenham, Downend, Bath, Bridgwater, Corsham, Potterne and Burbage.
9. Top – Midsomer Norton. Bottom – Taunton CC.
10. 1999.

OM (May 2026) 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. The next edition is due out in two months' time at the beginning of July.

Gloucestershire Association of Cricket Officials