

What you need to know about the 2021 County Championship

Next summer will welcome the return of both the County Championship and the Bob Willis Trophy after the First-Class Counties agreed a revised structure for next season.

Here are some common questions about both competitions to help you get across the key details:

What are the formats for the competitions?

Every team will begin the season with the opportunity to win both the County Championship and the Bob Willis Trophy. The County Championship will run in two stages:

Group Stage:

The 18 First-Class Counties have been split into three seeded groups of six counties. Each county will play the other counties in their group both home and away - a total of 10 matches.

At the end of the group stage, the top two counties in each group will progress to Division One for the second phase of the County Championship.

The other 12 counties will move into Divisions Two and Three. The third and fourth-placed teams will progress to Division Two while the fifth and sixth-placed teams move to Division Three.

Division Stage:

The First-Class Counties will play their final four County Championship matches after progressing to their Division.

How can a team win the County Championship?

The 2021 County Championship title will be decided by the team that finishes top of Division One.

How is the winner of the Bob Willis Trophy decided?

The top two teams in Division One will play for the Bob Willis Trophy in a five-day final at Lord's to ensure a showpiece event to conclude the men's first-class domestic season.

The playing conditions for the final are to be confirmed and will be announced in due course.

Which counties are in the three County Championship groups?

All three groups have six teams:

Group 1: Essex, Warwickshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Worcestershire, Durham

Group 2: Somerset, Hampshire, Surrey, Gloucestershire, Middlesex, Leicestershire

Group 3: Kent, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Northamptonshire, Glamorgan, Sussex

How were the groups decided?

Seedings for the Group Stage of the 2021 County Championship have been determined based on performances during the 2019 County Championship and the 2020 Bob Willis Trophy.

There has been a provision to accommodate derby matches within the groups, where appropriate with the seeding structure. This is to ensure that county members and supporters can look forward to some of county cricket's oldest rivalries resuming home and away next summer.

Could a team win both titles?

Yes. Essex will be seeking to defend both titles after winning the 2019 County Championship and the Bob Willis Trophy this summer.

How was this structure decided upon and will it be in place for future years?

The chairs of the First-Class Counties agreed this revised structure via a vote. It will be for next season only with the aim of helping to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

Next year a review and consultation is due to be held between the First-Class Counties, the ECB and other stakeholders regarding the men's domestic structure for 2022 and beyond.

When will the matches be played?

The full fixture list for the 2021 season, and the playing conditions for the men's first-class season, will be announced in due course.

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