THAMES VALLEY CRICKET LEAGUE

Established in 1972, The Morrant Thames Valley Cricket League is an important component of the ECB Premier League structure

TVCL16: Statement to Clubs – November 2016
Links to Play-Cricket (and other) Websites

Contents

1.   Introduction

When we introduced plans for implementing the new TVCL16 website in the 2015-16 close season, linkage with Play-Cricket ('P-C') and its websites was one of the selling points. The same was the case with regard to club websites which use packages such as HitsSports and Pitchero where data could be transferred or links could be developed.

This is the one major area where TVCL16 has not delivered as much as we had hoped and, rather than just sending out a self-congratulatory message, this note tries to explain some of what has happened behind the scenes. Although, necessarily, much of what follows is not cheering, it isn't all doom and gloom and we try to suggest where we go from here.

As you read what follows please don't forget all the positives that TVCL16 has brought and how players and clubs have felt more engaged with the League compared with 2015 and earlier seasons.

2.   Background

- P-C is an ECB product, free to use, for clubs, leagues and other cricketing bodies

- It aims to provide a website facility for all clubs in the country and is a bit like Marmite: some love P-C but many hate it. It has a chequered history, it can be difficult to use and only a minority of clubs in TVCL (and much of the South of the country) do much with it.

- ECB uses P-C to gather statistical information about participation - how many people play and how often; this is important for obtaining funding from Sport England.

- In common with other websites developed by Gary Murton, TVCL16 was to – and does – transmit match data to P-C.

- Following a meeting in June 2015 between ECB/Play-Cricket on the one hand and Gary Murton and several leagues from Yorkshire on the other, it was understood there was a firm commitment from Play-Cricket to accept and process scorecard information supplied to them. But this just hasn't happened.

- Nothing - not even the headline results, sent to P-C weekly - has been entered onto the Play-Cricket system. P-C has, presumably, used data on playing numbers but has not used what we have sent to populate scorecards on club sites and has not developed a linkage for doing this. This is the case for all the other league websites as well as TVCL16.

- In addition to action taken by Gary and his other client leagues, TVCL contacted P-C about this failure which we are at a loss to understand. ECB's current position is that there was a misunderstanding and that there was no undertaking to do any more than to use the data for high-level statistics on player participation etc.

- We pursued the matter with ECB's head of IT who suggested a plan for getting detailed scores onto the P-C sites. This was at the end of May 2016; it would have involved quite a lot of manual intervention (presumably in the short term) and P-C's development team was to contact TVCL to move this forward.

- Since then there has been no contact from P-C and TVCL's Management Committee considers that the chance of getting meaningful co-operation on this does not justify significant further effort on our part. However

we will maintain a dialogue in the hope of getting things moving and we have contacted P-C again in the hope that the approach they suggested last May could be resurrected.

- Unfortunately these matters are totally outside our control. Therefore the Management Committee has reluctantly had to work on the basis that the links will not be available in the foreseeable future and probably nothing will now be done for 2016. Therefore clubs who wish to see their results on the P-C system will need to take steps to do this themselves. What happens in 2017 is still a matter of conjecture.

3. Where We Are Now

It may be useful to summarise this.

(1) Play-Cricket

- **Scorecards:** these will only appear on clubs' P-C sites if your club or the opposition has entered it manually using P-C or Total Cricket Scorer ('TCS') or some other computer-based scoring system which P-C accepts.
- **League Tables:** P-C generates its own version of *our* league tables from what is on its own database.
  - Inevitably, given that, typically, only 39% of results have been posted there, with a range of between 2% and 82% across the various divisions the tables are shambolic and are far-removed from reality.
  - Moreover the tables do not reflect any penalties imposed (e.g. for umpiring or scorer failures) and there seems to be no provision for updating them centrally.
  - In other words P-C shows league tables which are totally misleading and are detrimental to TVCL.

This seems to be a situation that has existed for many years. TVCL is less than happy that these sham tables are being passed off as its own and this has now been raised with P-C management.

- **Club Websites:** at this moment the minority of clubs who rely on P-C for their sites can only maintain club averages etc on P-C by making sure that all their results are entered manually (or via TCS etc). However, although for 2016 onwards full league statistics are available from the TVCL site, it seems that clubs too may be powerless to inhibit links to the dubious league tables which P-C generates.

(2) Pitchero

Several clubs use Pitchero for their websites. Pitchero is marketed as a team management system, designed specifically to ease communication with players and to keep members up to date.

- This system relies on and downloads scorecard data from Play-Cricket.
- Pitchero has no facility for accepting scorecard data from elsewhere.
- Pitchero also imports the unreliable league tables which P-C generates.
- Nothing is done to calculate or record player averages etc
- So far Pitchero has not shown any interest in taking data from anywhere other than P-C.

(3) HitsSports

This is the website system most frequently used by our clubs – though its users are still a minority of the total TVCL membership.

- Detailed Scores: HitsSports accepts detailed scores, unlike Pitchero, and it produces player stats from what has been input.
- League Tables: HitsSports does not attempt to generate league tables - clubs provide a direct link to the TVCL tables. [at present links to the TVCL archive for previous seasons will be incorrect following the switch to TVCL16, but these can be corrected quite easily]
- HitsSports has been approached to ask that TVCL data be accepted and has been given a specification of the data format, but there has been no progress past that.
- Clubs who have contacted HitsSports about the lack of an interface for scorecards from TVCL16 have not received a reply, much less an explanation of why this is not possible.
- We do not know what linkage there is with Play-Cricket but detailed scorecards posted on club sites do not get onto P-C.

4.   Looking Ahead

   i.   Realistically the short-term expectation of the sort of linkage with P-C that looked certain a year ago is very low.

   ii.   This means that, for the present at least, each club needs to decide where it goes from here - we will do what we can to help you.

   iii.   We will continue to monitor the situation and to keep you informed.

5.   What Clubs Could Do

At this moment clubs have to decide what is in their best interests.

Depending on the facilities available on your club website you should be able to access what is held on TVCL16. We do not have the resources to provide comprehensive advice to users of P-C, Pitchero, HitsSports or other custom-built websites but, of course, we'll do what we can to assist in any particular case. It should be possible to incorporate links to, or even in-line frames from, the appropriate TVCL16 pages using the basic information below about how TVCL16 organises the data you'd be interested in.

TVCL16 – Fixture and similar Data

•   **Fixtures:**   The database used by TVCL uses a single identity number which is constant for each fixture in the season; even if a team drops out the number remains the same. For 2016 the numbers range from 1 to 1530 so that it is possible to access results and scorecards using these identities to create links (or inline frames) for club websites to access what is on TVCL. If there is a demand for this TVCL can produce a list which contains these details.

•   **League Tables:** a similar system has identities from 1 (Division 1) to 17 (Division 9b).

•   **Playing Stats:**   the data is held by reference to club identities, organised in a similar way

6.   What TVCL Will Do

As mentioned above, all we can promise at present is that we will keep you informed about any progress.

We are, of course, very sad that we could not deliver on one of the important selling points of the new system but we are sure you will realise that information about what would happen was given to us, and passed on, in good faith.

That it didn't come to pass was owing to circumstances completely outside our and our supplier's control – we will do what we can to alleviate any problems this has caused.