

Amendments to the Player Pathway 2023

Background

The recent report from the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC), commissioned by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), focused on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). As well as containing several recommendations it also focused on what they referred to as the 'Schools and the talent pathway'.

In England and Wales, the ICEC report recommends that the entire talent pathway structure should be overhauled to make it more meritocratic, inclusive, accountable, transparent and consistent. The full list of recommendations can be found in the link below.

<https://theicec.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/ICEC-Recommendations.pdf>

The Isle of Man Cricket Association (IOMCA) Strategy (2023-2027) has growing levels of participation in cricket as its core objective.

Under the key focus area of 'Education' the strategy also identifies that for cricket on the Isle of Man children and schools represent the greatest opportunity for increasing levels of participation.

In addition, the 'High Performance' objective sets out the goal of creating a 'fully inclusive pathway for male and female players, incorporating a development programme for emerging players and academy, as well as identifying the requirement to create development opportunities for U11, U13, U15 and U17 players.

One of the 'Values' that we have set for the IOMCA within the Strategy is **Inclusion** and states that 'we want to offer an inclusive environment for all cricket players, giving players the best environment to challenge themselves whilst expanding the cricket family.'

Whilst the IOMCA strategy has already set itself goals for increasing participation amongst children and schools in an inclusive environment, the IOMCA has also identified that the current junior player pathway is not helping to achieve these objectives. Parents and players have also raised several issues which the IOMCA is keen to address.

Issues with the current junior pathways

- U11, U13 and U15 playing numbers in junior leagues are decreasing.
- at the 2022 trials for pre-selection of age group squads, the numbers who attended were very low and not enough for a meaningful trial process, despite the introduction of an open trial.
- the coaching provided by the IOMCA and access to facilities and equipment is not reaching enough players at the U11, U13, U15 level.
- the players that the IOMCA coaches in the age groups squads are at an advantage and understandably get better and dominate the junior leagues, even with the introduction of retirements to junior cricket.
- it is difficult for anyone to join in the U13 or U15 squads if they have missed the junior training at U11, as the skills gap can be difficult for new squad members to catch up with.
- not everyone progresses at the same rate and the current approach for age groups restrict our ability to accommodate that.
- The previous structure posed financial challenges for parents and the IOMCA. Programme costs - £150 for clothing, £150 for training and periodic costs for off- Island competitions.

- The IOMCA funds £300 for every player on the current junior pathway programme. Given the issues highlighted above this investment is not helping to deliver the objective of promoting inclusivity and increasing participation.

Reviewed development opportunities and revised IOMCA pathway

The IOMCA is committed to its pathway being as open and inclusive as it possibly can be, so that any young person in the Isle of Man can access high quality cricket experiences whilst aspiring to play at the highest level they can.

As a result, considering the recommendations for the schools and talent pathway within the recent ICEC report and the issues identified with the existing IOMCA junior player pathways, the IOMCA is launching a brand new, exciting, and non-selective Skills Development Programme, aimed at providing increasing numbers of junior cricketers with additional coaching to support them in their development.

The IOMCA will run open access Skills Development sessions throughout the summer and winter for school year 4 to 6, 7 to 9 and 10 to 12 and open age for girls (primarily focusing years 7 to 11). These sessions will be used to support and provide additional coaching in specific areas of the game, complementing and supporting the training that the junior players receive at clubs.

The IOMCA Skills Development Programme will start at the year 4 age group and give the players their first opportunity to experience IOMCA cricket coaching. The coaching will be the same as the U11, U13, U15 and U17 coaching experienced by the IOMCA age group squads since 2015.

Players will have the opportunity to take part in three training blocks in winter (term-time only) and one training and match play block in the summer (term time only). Players can book onto one or all the training blocks depending on their availability.

The girls-only training will run in three blocks over the winter and one over the summer. These sessions aim to deliver a fun introduction to cricket, equip the girls with the skills and knowledge to play competitively and provide a pathway to club cricket and potentially to the Isle of Man Women's National Team.

Further information regarding the IOMCA Skills Development Programme Training Block dates will be released soon.

Main Changes:

- Opportunities will be provided for all cricketers in the outlined ages to access high quality coaching and training.
- Open training for all junior cricketers with qualified coaches with the removal of trials and selection for junior cricketers.
- Training sessions during the winter will be made available to book in school term blocks.
- Training and match play will be grouped by ability and physical maturity.

In response to comments from players and their families, to minimise the financial commitment there will be;

- No off-island match play - all on island Super 2s intra-squad match play;
- Isle of Man clothing is optional - training and match play can be done in club clothing or red and black sports clothing; and
- A discretionary hardship fund is to be introduced in conjunction with clubs for those who need it. Qualification will be based on eligibility for free school meals.

To assist with commitment from players and parents;

- Training and match play will be in term time; and
- Training will be provided in blocks to aid attendance and to improve the ability to train alongside other sports.

There will still be an Emerging Players Programme and Academy, selection for which will be at the discretion of the High Performance Coach, around future development potential, character, performances, opportunities in clubs and discussions with players and parents.

The changes to IOMCA player pathways have been made with the following aims:

- To increase the talent pool for Isle of Man cricket and club cricket.
- With a view to ensuring that all young cricketers in the Isle of Man have the opportunity to access high quality cricket coaching and training whilst aspiring to play at the highest level they can.
- To reduce the commitments on players and parents – in terms of time and expense.
- To embrace the right player/right environment approach.

Further details regarding the cost and how and when places on the training sessions can be booked will be announced soon.

If you have any questions regarding these changes, please email cdo@iomcricket.co.uk.

There will be a list of frequently asked questions populated on the website <https://www.iomcricket.co.uk/player-pathway.html> for all to reference.