



There was good news regarding junior participation with over 80% of clubs reporting youth numbers either the same or greater than the previous season, up from 63% last summer.

Sadly this was not replicated at senior level where only a quarter of clubs claimed to have no problems raising sides. Of the remainder, well over

a half admitted that they could do with more youth members and coaches while three clubs conceded that it was becoming a real struggle to maintain their youth development programme, either through lack of players or coaching staff.

Predictably, numbers of youth members at each club varied considerably from less than 20 to over 80 with the bulk of these being in the 41 to 60 group.

Responses to the perennial questions regarding the start, finish and number of games in The League again demonstrated the general satisfaction with these; 86% endorsing the start date of the competition and 62% the finish with the remainder equally wishing the season started earlier or ended later. Despite initial concerns about the size of some leagues, 76% were happy with the number of games with again equal numbers wanting more or less fixtures. These figures represent a slight increase in approval compared to 2013.



There was no suggestion that postponed games were considered any more frequent this summer with almost all replies rating them the same or less than last season. As to the most frustrating reasons for the postponement of fixtures, apart from the weather, a whopping 81% cited the failure of one team or another to raise a side.

With the issue of no result games frustrating many, The League canvassed opinions regarding appropriate punishments for defaulting sides. In line with The League's accommodating approach to the youth game, it was extremely heartening to learn that all but one club voted to either accept such instances as inevitable, or leave The League to impose penalties only in exceptional circumstances.

Under 17 cricket continues to provide challenges in its delivery demonstrated by the demise of The Hales Express Fitness League and more recently the Junior Carter Cup. Past experience has demonstrated that a later finish to this competition merely exacerbates the problems of team availability with holidays, job commitments and soccer training all taking their toll on player resources. When offered the choice of a larger single league, regional leagues or a finals day, there was no clear consensus for any of these and in future the decision between a single or regional league(s) will be determined solely by the number of entries.



Some managers suggested that a month should be left fallow for exams but the two week fixture window and flexibility offered by The League has in the past satisfied these concerns, particularly as many teams comprise a mix of older and younger players.

The League has never been particularly keen on the convoluted rules regarding the inclusion of county players in fixtures. This system however seems to have worked pretty well with the overwhelming majority either ratifying the continuation of the current system or wishing county players to be totally excluded from all competitions, a view similarly supported at U17 level where in 2015 county players will be defined as those who competed at this level the previous season.

An issue almost as contentious as the deployment of county players in league fixtures and equally divisive was the proposal to introduce compulsory retirement in League fixtures. The vote on this was so close that a second, more detailed ballot, was conducted to clarify opinions amongst respondents.



Although The League itself is against compulsory retirement and the player survey on this issue overwhelmingly rejecting the idea, with 83% opposed, there was no similar agreement amongst coaches and team managers.

Of the seventeen clubs canvassed, seven were totally opposed to any compulsory retirement at all, seven were in favour of retirement for all leagues and three were in favour of retirement in some leagues; two at U11 and U13 levels and one at U11, U13 & U15. When these results were weighted; i.e. responses from clubs allocated proportionately according to the number of teams they fielded in the competition, those in favour of the proposal were 30 with those against - 16.

Of the suggested retirement levels, the median value of these was U11-33, U13-39 & U15-43.

**Proposals and clarifications therefore for season 2015 are:**

- Current rules regarding participation of county players in league fixtures will continue unchanged.
- Statutory penalties for no result games shall no longer apply and will only be levied at The League's discretion in exceptional circumstances.
- The U17 League will continue in its present format with a single or regional league(s) format determined solely by the number of entries.
- At U17 level, County Players will be deemed to be those who competed at county level (at any age group) the previous season.
- Compulsory retirement will be trialled at **U11 & U13 only**, with the level set at 30 runs for U11 players and 40 runs for U13 players.
- There will be **no** compulsory retirement at U15 & U17 level. This will be reviewed at the end of next summer's season.

The following rule will therefore proposed for 2015.

**When an U11 (U13) batter reaches or passes the personal total of 30 (40) runs they must retire, but may return to the crease on the departure of the seventh batter. Retired batters must return in the order of retirement and take the place of the retiring or dismissed batter. The returning batter shall retire when they have scored an additional 30 (40) runs even if this retirement would end the innings before the agreed number of overs have been bowled.**

