



South Central Region ECB ACO

Time to get back on the Field.

Planning your return to Umpiring after Lockdown.

Now there is a light at the end of the Covid lock down tunnel maybe it is time to start thinking carefully about how you go back to officiating after an absence which may have had an impact upon your confidence and competence?

Some may struggle more than others with their confidence if pushed too hard too soon. Here are some ideas about how to mitigate any such feelings and get you in the right frame of mind and body to get back out on the field.



Isolation and the unknown.

The immediate effects of Covid on umpires was to strip away time in the middle and time away from colleagues and friends and relationships you may have built up over many seasons.

Many of you will have missed doing the thing you love and would have wondered if you could ever get back to doing it again.

Many thoughts may have gone through your minds:

- How will I do if/when I do get back out there?
- Will I still be able to hack it?
- Will I be as good as I was? (Were you ever as good as you thought you were? 😊)
- What if everybody else comes back stronger than me?

For many being an umpire is a big part of your summer and not being able to do that role can leave you questioning who you are and with plenty of time to consider what other interests you may have, and do you actually miss the white coat?

Although you have been inactive as an official for some time you may feel that you should be able to pick up exactly where you left off but that may not be the case.



Consider the lock down as a longer-term injury if and when you were a player, would you expect to go straight back into the First XI without any net practice or maybe a Seconds game or two to prove to yourself and your team you were back up to speed? You may need to accept that you need to put some work in to get back to the top of your game.



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Fitness in Body and Mind

During this down time many of you will have been working on building up fitness, this does not necessarily mean in the gym every day, but walking, cycling or using any time you have to take some form of exercise. Others may have been working on the mental side of their game, swotting up on the Laws or reading Tom Smith's, trying their hand at the online Stage One course (it is free!) or the many other CPD outlets that have sprung up during the Covid period on ECB ACO and County web sites, as well as newspaper and other web sites to pit your wits against Hawkeye etc.

Some will have done one or the other, some both, some neither, - whatever group you fit into this will undoubtedly have an impact on how you come back into the game and on your confidence levels.

It is easy to see how some may find it difficult to remain motivated during this time and everybody's circumstances will be different, but all will have been separated in some way from friends and colleagues and many will miss the social aspects of being around the game. The question is how to get back into the swing of things and build your confidence and motivation?



Here are a few tips/ideas:

- Try to make any training fun – walk or cycle with friends and family or colleagues now we can meet up again. (and take a picnic!)
- Try out some of the online training e.g. The Times LBW challenge (see below)
- Start slow and make sure you have the basics right – read up the Laws and regulations, try that Stage One course. (and check your kit still fits! 😊)
- For more specific, targeted aspects try some of the CPD modules.
- Think about how you want to develop and set yourself some goals for the coming season and identify what you have to work on to reach those goals.
- Keep your eye on the bigger picture – there are others in the same boat as you.

Now is a good time to think about the way you think and umpire and make any changes to achieve goals. Challenge your established practices and do not be afraid to try something new and see what the impact is. (A simple example – if you have always signalled to your colleague with one ball left in the over try doing it on two balls – newly trained umpires will be asking you to do this anyway.)

Some of you will have enjoyed the last few months of relative inactivity and the different pace of life. It might have allowed you time to relax, release some of the stresses and contemplate your next moves in umpiring. That may well be not doing as many games and if so, that may be a good thing for your mental health and family relationships, do not feel you have to go back to every Saturday and Sunday plus all the midweek games you are offered – balance is everything.



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General aspects of emerging from lockdown.



Few of us will be the same coming out of quarantine as we were going in: People with pre-existing mental health conditions lost many of the routines that helped them cope, exacerbating their problems in the process. Many have experienced fresh hardship, like the loss of a job or the death of a loved one, which they likely were not able to properly mourn. Everyone has been forced to alter how they live, work, and accomplish even the most mundane tasks, such as shopping for groceries.

Emerging from such circumstances may well create unique side effects.

FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out) may have been replaced by FOGO (Fear Of Going Out). While some people are ready to rub shoulders with strangers, others will be apprehensive about returning to the social sphere and that includes a group of 22 players on a cricket field.

Some will take time to work through the lockdown state of mind and may find reintegration difficult and stressful in adapting to the “new normal” even if that ends up being not too far removed from the “old normal”.

Getting back out on the field with a group of players will carry some risk, however small, but so will going to the supermarket. Those who will perform best in early games are those who will be able to accept the fact there is not going to be absolute certainty and learn to manage their emotional response to the game situation.

You may well feel more nervous than you remember about your game, the night before, driving to the ground, meeting the players, the first ball, the first LBW shout. Be aware of these and fall back on your routines and practices, your game preparation, match day routines and they will help you bounce back and be resilient.

You can take responsibility now for making a positive return to the middle but remember your colleague may be struggling a bit with confidence so make sure your approach has a positive impact on their return as well.





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Some sources of training materials/CPD etc:

- [South Central Region CPD Modules](#)
- [Lancashire ACO CPD Modules](#)
- [Middlesex ACO Preparation](#)
- [ECB Out-or-Not Out](#)
- [The Times LBW's](#)
- [ECB ACO Stage One online courses](#)

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