

ISSUE

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BFB

Beyond the Boundaries
The PCA membership magazine



WINDS OF CHANGE
ALICE CAPSEY & DANNI WYATT

EVERYONE'S GAME
ICEO ONE YEAR ON

SIBLING SYNERGY
WILL & SOPHIA SMALE

JADE DERNBACH
EOIN MORGAN
RISHI PATEL



A MAN OF MANY COLOURS PHIL SALT



THE LONG WALK

How and why anxiety is cricket's creeping concern and what the PCA is doing to help.

Launched during Mental Health Awareness Week in May, the PCA announced 'There's no protection from anxiety' as the game's means of addressing what are believed to be rising rates of anxiety in professional cricket.

Described as 'an awareness campaign that's designed to reduce stigma and provide crucial support to players facing mental health challenges', it aims to prompt players to firstly pause, and then to reflect on their own, and their teammates' mental health. The physical manifestation of the project comes in the form of a partnership with leading equipment makers Masuri, their helmets – in every dressing room – sporting the tagline and available helpline; this confidential support manned by Sporting Chance, the PCA mental health support services partner since 2018.

Colin Bland is CEO at Sporting Chance, "Despite what my name might say, I don't pretend to be an expert in

cricket. But I do know what is expected of them as athletes is far more than any previous era. It's a massive success for cricket, but obviously an additional pressure on players.

"I would say that the work the PCA is doing in promoting the support that is available to people is helping them reach out when they might previously not have done so."

The PCA launched its helpline in 2005. In 2023 Sporting Chance provided support to more than 100 individuals. This number included 49 current players, of which 49 per cent of them cited anxiety as a primary concern. Worryingly, this prevalence rate surpasses that of any other sport. "Each sport has its own flavour," adds Bland. "If we were to create a pie chart of the presenting issues across all sports, it would definitely slice differently for all of them. But anxiety would be present in all of them.

"As far as cricket goes, even though it's a team sport, it's a team sport that

THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

Early statistics show that anxiety is still the highest presenting mental health concern in 2024.

IN 2023, SPORTING CHANCE PROVIDED SUPPORT TO

100+

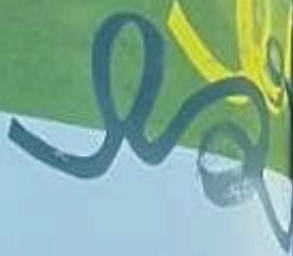
INDIVIDUALS THROUGH THEIR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PCA.

49%

OF CURRENT PLAYERS WHO USED SPORTING

CHANCE IN 2023 REPORTED ANXIETY AS A MAIN CONCERN

SPORTING CHANCE



It's a game where you could wait to bat for two days and then get a good ball first up, and you're done. There has to be real specific elements of focus, it's incredibly difficult to focus for five days, impossible even. It's not your classic nine-to-five, let's put it that way. You also have to live with the idea of failure every day. On social media, your coaches, friends, family, women are involved in this. You're not younger than men, so it's hard to make changes. That 'don't cry' tradition is far more helpful. In terms of the process, if initial support is made, PCA members get a lot of support. All starting with an introduction to see 'if we connect,'" offers Dutton. "We're not going to take them where they don't want to go." Dutton says, "And it's not 'an old bloke with a beard and glasses, wearing corduroy trousers'. It's about having to lie on a couch, talking about your childhood."



"We're just normal people, passionate about our job, helping put the pieces together in search of the 'why'. Just trying to help people realise why they're feeling like they are."

Anxiety manifests itself in many ways. Fear of failure, fear of subconscious performance, fear of performing well – and these are very often subconscious behaviours. Arising from any number of different sources, but all viewed from an individual's own perception. Making the connection to an often unique set of circumstances to grasp and make sense of. "The best way to perform in life, is with freedom," counters Dutton. "If you're a batsman or bowler that's tense – even for a fraction – that's going to impact you somewhat along the line. Understanding the individual – sometimes pulling a player outside of the firing line is the best thing, sometimes it's backing them all the way – it all comes into play."

England's team psychologist David Young, watches a net session ahead of the Test match.



...after cricket can also prove a contributing factor. "We are talking about a potential loss of identity, preparing some time in your mid 30s," states Dutton. "Almost having to start again. Certainly not doing what you've always done. As a professional cricketer your days are organised with a purpose and then suddenly it's like 'right, get on with it yourself!'" Dutton believes that positive 'self-talk' – even when an individual isn't necessarily feeling it – can have a great impact on careers. "Get a highlights package, cut it down to a minute-and-a-half. Add your favourite piece of music and watch it. Knowing that what is being viewed happened. That's something you've done. Feel the emotion of taking that great catch or making that great shot. Those moments are why we love sport. We crave those dopamine fixes." Dutton rounds things up by adding, "It's a great sport because it's so

teammates, or even the opposition – there are so many different nuances. And that's without factoring in the fact that other teams don't go easy on you either! They're there to win, every bit as much as you are. Cricketers become professionals for a reason. The reason is because of a love of playing cricket. Carry on loving cricket should get you to where you want to be." In any sport, the identification of what are the controllable aspects of performance and what remains outside of that control is vital. And in that, 95 per cent of the time, according to Dutton, "It's the uncontrollable aspects that cause stress and anxiety. That goes for any sport. In any walk of life." For immediate support, PCA members can contact the Sporting Chance helpline at 07780008877. Additionally, players can fill out the online contact form on Sporting

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