



CHANGE TO LAW 41.7

(From 1st April 2019)

OFFICIAL

Marylebone Cricket Club

Introduction

In October 2017, MCC published a new Code of Laws. The 2017 Code was the first complete review and rewrite of the Laws in almost two decades. It was the result of a global consultation, took three years of drafting and sought to make the Laws fairer, more inclusive and easier to understand.

In the year since publication of the 2017 Code, MCC has listened to a great deal of feedback from around the world. Happily, most of it has been positive, with the Laws being adopted and understood by players, umpires and supporters. However, there have been some errors spotted, and one Law change in particular has proved unpopular.

MCC is thus publishing the 2nd Edition of the 2017 Code, which will come into force on 1st April 2019. Most of the changes which will differentiate this 2nd Edition from the first are small – minor corrections, explanatory clarifications, and the odd alteration to a Law that was drafted imperfectly. These will be published, in full, at the start of January 2019, giving all stakeholders plenty of time to read and process them before they come into force.

There is, however, one more significant change, which will have an impact on players and umpires – a reworking of Law 41.7, which relates to full-pitch deliveries over waist height (known colloquially as ‘beamers’). Because this will affect umpire training, MCC has chosen to publish the new Law at the earliest possible date.

Background

In the first edition of the 2017 Code, Law 41.7 (Bowling of dangerous and unfair non-pitching deliveries) imposed penalties on a bowler who bowls a full toss over the batsman’s waist that were stricter than those imposed under the previous Code of Laws.

The tightened areas were as follows:

- A ball of any speed over waist height was deemed to be a No ball and dangerous. Under the 2000 Code, slow deliveries could be up to shoulder height.
- In the 2000 Code, two warnings used to be given to the bowler, with a third infringement seeing him/her removed from the attack. In the 2017 Code, only one warning is given, so a bowler will be suspended for two full tosses over waist height at any speed.

Feedback

The feedback from around the world to this change was, almost universally, negative, with many feeling that it was overly harsh, particularly on younger bowlers. Several Governing Bodies wrote Playing Conditions to work around the Law, and those matches which did use it reported problems throughout the year.

MCC has listened to that feedback, and changed the Law with the objective of creating a better and fairer Law, while maintaining the core aim of improving player safety and enjoyment.

The Change

As is already the case with short-pitched bowling, the umpire will now decide whether a full-pitched delivery is dangerous, based on various factors such as the speed or direction of the ball, repeated delivery of full tosses and the ability of the batsman.

There is no longer a ‘catch-all’ sanction, but umpires are instead required to use their best judgement to determine whether a delivery is dangerous. If it is dangerous, it will lead to a first and final warning. If not, it will still be a No ball, but there will be no warning.

41.7 Bowling of dangerous and unfair non-pitching deliveries

- 41.7.1 Any delivery, which passes or would have passed, without pitching, above waist height of the striker standing upright at the popping crease, is unfair. Whenever such a delivery is bowled, the umpire shall call and signal No ball.
- 41.7.2 The bowling of a delivery as defined in 41.7.1 is also dangerous if the bowler's end umpire considers that there is a risk of injury to the striker. In making that judgement the umpire shall:
- disregard any protective equipment worn by the striker
 - be mindful of:
 - the speed, height and direction of the delivery
 - the skill of the striker
 - the repeated nature of such deliveries.
- 41.7.3 If the umpire considers a non-pitching delivery, or a series of non-pitching deliveries, to be dangerous under 41.7.2, when the ball is dead, the umpire shall repeat the No ball signal to the scorers and then caution the bowler, indicating that this is a first and final warning. The umpire shall also inform the other umpire, the captain of the fielding side and the batsmen of what has occurred. This caution shall apply to that bowler throughout the innings.
- 41.7.4 Should there be any further dangerous such delivery by the same bowler in that innings, the umpire shall
- call and signal No ball
 - when the ball is dead, direct the captain of the fielding side to suspend the bowler immediately from bowling
 - inform the other umpire for the reason for this action.
- The bowler thus suspended shall not be allowed to bowl again in that innings.
- If applicable, the over shall be completed by another bowler, who shall neither have bowled any part of the previous over, nor be allowed to bowl any part of the next over.
- Additionally, the umpire shall;
- report the occurrence to the batsmen and, as soon as practicable, to the captain of the batting side.
- The umpires together shall report the occurrence as soon as possible after the match to the Executive of the offending side and to any Governing Body responsible for the match, who shall take such action as is considered appropriate against the captain, any other individuals concerned and, if appropriate, the team.
- 41.7.5 The warning and action sequences in 41.7.3 and 41.7.4 are independent of those in 41.6.
- 41.7.6 If the umpire considers that a bowler deliberately bowled a non-pitching delivery, deemed to be unfair as defined in 41.7.1, then the caution and warning in 41.7.3 shall be dispensed with. The umpire shall;
- immediately call and signal No ball.
 - when the ball is dead, direct the captain of the fielding side to suspend the bowler immediately from bowling and inform the other umpire for the reason for this action.
- The bowler thus suspended shall not be allowed to bowl again in that innings.
- If applicable, the over shall be completed by another bowler, who shall neither have bowled any part of the previous over, nor be allowed to bowl any part of the next over.

The Law (continued)

- report the occurrence to the batsmen and, as soon as practicable, to the captain of the batting side.

The umpires together shall report the occurrence as soon as possible after the match to the Executive of the offending side and to any Governing Body responsible for the match, who shall take such action as is considered appropriate against the captain, any other individuals concerned and, if appropriate, the team.

Interpretation of the new Law

In order to help players and umpires understand and enact this new Law, MCC has provided the following detailed guidance.

Every beamer is still to be considered unfair; non-pitching deliveries above waist height will never be eliminated from the game entirely but are to be strongly discouraged and should always be called a No ball. Assuming a non-pitching delivery is accidental, the umpire has two matters to take into consideration.

1. The umpire must consider the height at which the ball would have passed the striker standing upright at the crease. The ball that is difficult to judge for height is one that is dropping as it reaches the striker. If the striker tries to play it well in front of the body, or has stepped down the pitch, it will be difficult to know how far it would have dropped by the time it reached the popping crease. An enquiring look from the bowler's end umpire to his/her colleague, answered by a pre-agreed signal from the striker's end umpire, can be extremely helpful. However, it should be noted that it is still for the bowler's end umpire to make the decision.

If the decision is taken that the delivery was above waist height, then it is a beamer and unfair. The umpire will call and signal No ball, whatever else he/she decides.

2. The umpire must then decide whether the delivery is dangerous. This is not as straightforward as simply judging the pace and direction of the ball. Of course, faster deliveries are more likely to be dangerous, but there are many other considerations, not least the context of the delivery. For example, against a fast bowler, the batsman – anticipating quick, possibly short-pitched deliveries – will be expecting the ball to rise up off the pitch. An attempted slower ball that loops out of the bowler's hand and hits the batsman on the head might be extremely dangerous despite being slow, because it is so unexpected that the batsman does not follow it with his/her eyes out of the bowler's hand. That same looping delivery bowled by a spinner who is constantly flighting the ball comes without the element of surprise and might not be dangerous.

Similarly, deliveries directed at the batsman are more likely to be dangerous than those which are wide of him/her, but this is not a hard-and-fast rule in determining danger. In the following example, three deliveries are bowled by a fast bowler. The first ball is fast, high and well wide of the batsman on the off side. The second ball is fast, high and well wide of the batsman on the leg side. At this point, the umpire may consider that the bowling is becoming dangerous. The third ball may then be straight, and could be seriously dangerous to the batsman, with the bowler at this point clearly being out of control. In this scenario, the second ball might therefore be considered dangerous in the eyes of the umpire, even though the first, in isolation, was not.

Another factor to be considered is repetition. As with short-pitched bowling, even a very skilful player might be worn down by a barrage of beamers. A batsman who is constantly swatting such deliveries for six

should not be 'punished' with the removal of the wayward bowler but once it is clear that, due to their repetition, the deliveries have become dangerous, the umpire should begin the warning process.

The first time that an umpire identifies any delivery as dangerous, a warning must be given. Once a bowler has been warned, the process continues no matter which batsman he/she is bowling to. If that bowler delivers a second dangerous beamer at any batsman, that delivery is enough for them to be suspended from bowling for the rest of the innings.

Finally, if the umpire considers that a beamer was not an accident but deliberately bowled, there is no warning. This is a very serious offence. Context should also be helpful in determining whether or not the delivery was deliberate. The captain must immediately remove the bowler from the attack, for the rest of the innings, at the direction of the umpire.

Such offences are thankfully very rare and unlikely to happen without some indication of trouble beforehand. If the umpires realise there is bad feeling in the match they should both watch and listen carefully for any signs of trouble and involve both captains to prevent escalation to this level if at all possible.

Reporting of a bowler and the captain for any suspension will of course follow.