

Millfield opens 'world-class' cricket centre



The Millfield Cricket Centre opened in spring 2020 and is already being spoken about in the same lofty circles as the world-class National Cricket Centre at Loughborough. Millfield Director of Cricket Mark Garaway has overseen this project, which saw Paragon Structures construct the build before specialists Durant Cricket took over to complete the fitting out of the unique facility.

"There was a lot of planning ahead of this project but in the end, the build came together very quickly," explained Garaway, a former Hampshire cricketer and head coach with Somerset, who also boasts assistant coach and analyst with the England men's team on a glittering CV. "To hear professional players comparing our facility with the National Cricket Centre is very flattering. Gloucestershire first team were down here for six sessions and absolutely loved it. We had a serious quick bowler like David Payne easily fitting his run up in and getting a proper work out. According to coach Ian Harvey (a World Cup winner with Australia), that set this facility apart from the rest. I just wish I'd have had the opportunity to practise in

places like this when I was younger!"

This unique facility requires only nominal foundations, making it more affordable than a traditional cricket building construction. It contains a five-lane indoor netting system, with all of the nets boasting fixed roofs and retractable wings, providing coaches with complete flexibility – allowing the use of just one net, with the rest tidied away, to all five nets. In addition, a perimeter net allows for a specialist 4G fielding area and there is also a black curtain to pull across to cater for the white-ball game.

Garaway picks up the story. "We have five lanes with three different pitch types to assist spin and seam bowling. We want to challenge every batsman and bowler to work across the lanes and adapt their game – because that is what the best players in the world do. Look at Test cricket – the pitch changes massively from day one to day five. This can be replicated in an hour's session here, where you can bat on three different surfaces against the same types of bowlers. And that's really exciting.



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“Historically, practising indoors has always been a bit false. Any bowler capable of turning their arm over can deliver a snorting bouncer while spinners can get whacked on flat pitches that skid on. Outside, more often than not there is something in the wicket and we need to replicate that – and to assist wicketkeepers to learn to keep on pitches that spin and bounce differently. This centre does all of that – bringing the outdoors inside. And with us being seven months of the year indoors fulltime, it is massively important as a country that we can replicate outdoor conditions because if we are not, we are practising false things really. This also means that we can use practice time far more efficiently in the summer when it rains.”

Durant Cricket worked closely with Garaway to complete the project with owner Cristian Durant, who also boasts a lifetime

involved in the game, having previously played county 2nd XI and Minor County representative cricket, very much a ‘hands on’ style managing director. Garaway continued: “I’ve known Cristian for years and his understanding of cricket and technical solutions for cricket buildings is off the charts. When you are working on something as iconic and ambitious as this facility, there are going to be challenges thrown at you. Between us, we met every challenge and it is Cristian’s knowledge of the game that sets his business apart from the rest.

“The centre we’ve built allows for increased numbers inside working in a multi-discipline fashion. We can have two squads practising at the same time – in the spin nets, in the seam nets and also diving around in the 4G fielding area. All at the same time, in a really safe environment. It’s a gamechanger for us.”

Durant Cricket offer free advice and site visits. For more information:



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