

SCCL Premier Division Preview 2026

By Jamie Dowley

Wellington favourites but Quatt to push them all the way

After coasting to a league and cup double in 2025, Wellington have strengthened their squad again but from a neutral perspective we hope they don't have it all their own way. So, let's look at the state of play across the division on the eve of the season, in my team by team preview, looking at the new signings, the overseas, hear the Captains views, and giving my own verdict ahead of the 2026 renewal.



Allscott Heath (last year 3rd) “Maintain the growth”

Captain: Callum Starling

Overseas: Kuldeep Devatwal (IND Bat/off spin)

After reaching their highest ever placing in Shropshire League cricket, Allscott are all set to go again and will have been delighted to keep hold of star overseas Kuldeep Devatwal for a 3rd season, while at the same time enticing veteran batsman Maz Hasnain from Whitchurch to further strengthen their top order. Callum Starling starts his 2nd season at the helm and in characteristic fashion is keen to keep expectation under control, but is no doubt quietly confident they can give a very good account of themselves. There is little other player movement apart from adding Jack Garmson to the squad, the ex-Shrewsbury allrounder has been brought to the club by Bradley Thornton and has been shaping up well at nets. On the outgoing front Mo Adall has left after joining halfway through last season.

Captains View

“Ultimately we want to continue the growth of the club, and I'm pleased we have retained our squad and strengthened the top order with Maz, Jason Summers who has been brilliant the last couple of years, and Luke Thornton who is capable of really kicking on with the bat. I also think we have the bowling attack to ask questions of every team, but we know all clubs can be competitive on their day and the likes of Quatt and St Georges will be stronger than last year. The standard of overseas looks to be very high this year but we are more than happy with ours who is tried and tested”

One to watch

Connor Starling could well establish himself in the team this year to continue the family tradition.

My Verdict: The signing of Hasnain is a real statement of intent and as a fully established Premier Division side they will clearly be mixing in the upper echelons of the Division. But have they reached their peak or is there more to come? That's the big question.



Ludlow (last year 5th) **“We are all dark horses”**

Captain: Luke Miles

Overseas: Nathan Engelbrecht (SA, wk/bat)

With the departure of Jason Oakes to Wellington, Luke Miles assumes the captaincy and will be keen to start a fresh chapter at The Burway. Besides losing Oakes, the ex-Stretton pair of Tanzeel Nazqi and Salahuddin Malik have also departed after brief but useful spells, but on the plus side Louis Watkins returns after a sabbatical and Richard Taylor is back after a long lay off. An unknown quantity is new signing Luke Palmer, a seam bowler new to the area. For an overseas, club chairman Phil Parker has again gone down the South Africa Wicket keeper/bat route, and if Nathan Engelbrecht can perform as well as Oakes did over a 5 year spell, he will have another gem on his hands.

Captains View: “We are aiming to finish top 5 again for the 3rd season running and be a hard team to beat every time we take to the field. It’s a blow to lose Jason of course, as well as Naqvi and Sal, but it gives opportunities to the likes of Jack Condiff, Sammy Bowen and our new signing Luke Palmer. Deon Patel also has lots of responsibility on his shoulders now and I’m excited to see Louis Watkins back, we are always a better side with him on the field. Wellington are clearly strong favourites but I think we are all dark horses”

One to Watch: Deon Patel has always threatened to have a big season and there is no time like the present.

My Verdict: As well as Patel, there is a fair amount resting on Miles and Joe Williams shoulders, the two stand out players on the roster will have to have very good seasons for Ludlow to finish where the captain wants. But one thing has been proven in recent seasons, do not underestimate Ludlow CC.



Madeley (last year: 11th) **“So much rests on the pro”**

Captain and Overseas : Mithun (SRL offspin/bat)

Information has been hard to get out of Park Street pre-season which may tell its own story. Mithun Jaywickarema is back for a 3rd season at the club and this time takes on the armband, where he will be assisted by club stalwart Martin Boyle and Oli Davis. Last year was a major struggle and they ultimately survived in the committee rooms rather than on the field, something they will be desperate to avoid this time. Nadeem Ahmad and Salim Ahmed will again be big players with the bat, but so much rests on the captain/pro, last year he bowled the most overs in the division and will surely have to do something similar

to his 650 runs and 45 wickets if Madeley are to be competitive. Boyle is still a more than useful new ball bowler, and Oli Davis has threatened to produce some big numbers in the past and could go well.

Captains views: None at time of going to press.

One to watch: Farmamullah Safi has done well in the 2nds but hasn't quite got it together in his fleeting first team appearances, but he is well thought of at the club.

My Verdict: It could be a tough season in South Telford, and the 2nd longest serving members of the division have it all on to maintain their status for 2027, but in the past they have always found a way.



Newtown (last year: 10th) **“Survival first”**

Captain : Ben Price

Overseas: Jordan Baijnath (SA, bat/off spin bowler)

Ben Price continues as captain having taken over halfway through last season and has another big job on his hands to make the Mid Wales outfit competitive this time around. His task hasn't been helped by the loss of David Laird, the nomadic all-rounder has moved on to Wellington, but on the plus side the retention of Sam Baugh is a huge boost. Baugh and fellow slow bowler Nathan Smith were outstanding in the red ball format in particular in 2025 and Price will no doubt be looking for something similar this time around. New overseas signing Jordan Baijnath replaces Marco Malan and has decent stats behind him, while Dave Anthony missed the whole of last season with a snapped achilles and is back in the squad.

Captains View: “We would love to target mid table but realistically we have to target survival first, losing David Laird leaves a big gap for us as he's a proven performer at the level. This gives others in the club a good opportunity to step up but we are probably one batter short of where we would like to be. It will be great to have Dave Anthony back in the group and retaining Sam Baugh having thought we had lost him to Wombourne in the Staffs League is great news too. Wellington will be incredibly hard to beat, and I'm sure the likes of Wem will push them close”

One to Watch: He was highlighted last year but once again Griff Davies is someone who has the tools to be a major all-rounder in this division, although the Cardiff Uni student is currently carrying a knee injury and may miss the start of the season.

My Verdict: If they can get their home form back to what it was in previous years they should survive and wins against the teams around them would be useful, something they struggled with last time. In the captain Price they have a quality player at this level and he will need to lead from the front one feels, as their batting looks a bit light once again, although the overseas signing does seem an upgrade.



Quatt (last year: 6th) **“Stronger in every department”**

Captain: Jamie Lunn

Overseas: Nipun Karunanayake (SL bat/mystery spinner)

Quatt will be determined to resume normal service after a poor year in 2025, when they only scraped into the top half on the last day of the season. Alex Biddle has stepped down after just one year and been replaced by Jamie Lunn, who only joined last May but made a strong impression. Lunn who played in Staffs previously, has used his connections to bring in Todd Henderson from Pelsall, the experienced middle order bat and opening bowler weighed in with 650 runs and 40 wickets in the South Staffs Prem and is sure to be a major player at the same level in the pyramid. Another serious upgrade is in the Pro department with Sri Lankan Nipun a veteran of over 100 first class games and 12 centuries, with club officials optimistic he will arrive in time for the season opener at Wem. On the bowling front Dan Handley is over his stress fracture and Lunn will have plenty of options each week with the likes of Ryan Wheldon, Jed Edwards, Scott Furber and Biddle also offering bowling variety. James Ralph has rejoined, the former Shropshire captain tells me he is playing 2nds only, a major boost for their side in Division 1 and I am sure could step up in an emergency if required.

Captains view: “It’s a blank slate with me as captain and there will be opportunities for all the squad, but ultimately we think we can improve on last year’s position. Todd and Nipun will make us stronger in every department and our younger players are quite experienced now so I’m expecting everyone to improve. I expect familiar names near the top but my dark horses would be Shelton who have signed an excellent pro”

My Verdict: Whisper it quietly but club officials are confident of a title challenge and looking at the shape of the squad you can certainly see why. A tough opening docket of fixtures will be an interesting test, but if anyone is likely to stop Wellington I feel it may well be Quatt. Like Wellington they benefit from having their 2nds in Division 1, and although they have proven to be the ultimate SCCL bridesmaids, eventually they will surely get up the aisle, I’ve a feeling it may be this year.



Sentinel (last year: 7th) ***“We expect to be competitive”***

Captain: Ed Ashlin

Overseas: Nick Bateup (Aus, top order bat/seamer)

It's as you were at Albert Road where Ed Ashlin carries on the good work that has seen his side comfortably finish mid table for the last few seasons, he will once again put his faith in a talented group of younger players some of whom have been playing club cricket in Australia and may come on for the run. One new name is Craig Williams, who has been playing his cricket in Berkshire and will compete for a place in the top or middle order, while batsman Muhammed Zaheer is a last-minute pick up from Shelton and is experienced at this level. There are no departures but Cameron Watson may be available less, so the seam workload will be shared by an array of bowlers with Jonny Evans again leading the attack. Australian Nick Bateup replaces Aaryan Dixit as overseas, he was playing in the Airedale and Wharfedale League in 2025 with reasonable success and is a top order batter who also bowls seam change ups.

Captains views: “We always want our young players to keep developing and improving. We have a good talent pool at the club, Harry Thomas in particular is a seamer who showed great potential last year and we are excited to see how he has come on. I expect us to be competitive”

Ones to watch: As well as Thomas, one club insider is confident of a big showing from leg spinner Matt Cliffe who excelled in the 2nd team in 2025 and could play a big role in the red ball format later in the season.

My Verdict: Finishes of 6th, 6th and 7th the last 3 seasons show a solidity that should mean they are competitive most weeks, you would hope and expect that some of the young players they have invested in really step up to be big Premier Division performers. Mid table beckons again, but perhaps in the lower rather than upper zone.



Shelton
CRICKET CLUB

Shelton (last year 8th) ***“Our ultimate ambition is to challenge for the title”***

Captain: Jack Morris

Overseas: Navindu Vithanage (SL keeper/bat)

It's all change in West Shrewsbury, as Jack Morris takes over as captain after Simon Jones steps away following 5 successful seasons and the new skipper is keen to galvanise what looks a decent side on paper. The headline signing is that of Navindu Vithanage, the 27 year old Sri Lankan makes the move after 3 years

in the Birmingham Premier League with Himley and with over 100 first class games in his back catalogue is likely to make an instant impression in the SCCL. Morris is now blessed with wicket-keepers with Dan Walker returning after a couple of seasons at Shrewsbury and he will really strengthen a top order that has sometimes struggled at this level. Two Team of the Year entrants that remain from last year are the aforementioned Jones who will lead the attack and Saleh Ahmed who has already hit the ground running in pre-season, while the ever reliable Ross Griffiths will no doubt be among the wickets. His brother Sam is an injury doubt however.

Captains View: “It’s been a highly positive winter, training has gone well, we are happy with our recruitment and we believe we can compete in what is a very competitive Prem. While our ambition is to challenge for the title, a more realistic objective for us would be a top half finish. We have received excellent feedback on announcing Nav as overseas and having Dan back from Shrewsbury is also a big boost to our batting order”

Ones to watch: Last year we highlighted Ryan Cumming and Freddie Salisbury, while their first team appearances were limited in 2025, Morris believes they can both step up with bat and ball this time.

My Verdict: It was a bit of a struggle last year, but I see no such issues this year and a top half finish is well within reach. The new captain is saying all the right things and I fancy they may just finish highest of the three Shrewsbury teams.



Shrewsbury 2nds (last year: Div1 champions) **“We belong at this level”**

Captain: Josh Anders was all set for the role but an ACL injury has ruled him out for the season, with Rob Foster set to be on field captain

Overseas: Kieran Gill (AUS Bat)

Having stormed to the Division 1 title last time, Shrewsbury 2nds are back for a 3rd spell in the Premier and will be keen for a prolonged stay on this occasion. They were obviously impressed with young Count overseas Kieran Gill as the Kiwi has moved across town and will presumably open the batting for his new side. Other new signings include Harry Webster from Shelton and keeper bat Krish Chadda who comes over from Staffs. Zane Beattie hasn’t returned however and he was a major player in their promotion, he will no doubt be missed with a lot on the shoulders of the experienced Rob Foster. Thomas Richards is an improving player he was very good in the Premier in 2024, while they will be hoping that their 1st team have some weeks when they are loaded as that can only benefit the 2nds.

Captains View : Anders “We believe we belong at this level and are good enough to challenge all sides. We have a large array of youthful talent coming through and we are excited to see how they develop and challenge this year. There is a great atmosphere around the club and all our teams are shaping up well going into the season”

One to watch: The link with Shrewsbury School is still strong and George Jenkins is someone they have high hopes for at London Rd when school commitments allow.

My Verdict: It's not ideal when you lose your captain on the eve of the season so there is pressure on Rob Foster both tactically and playing wise. The history of Shrewsbury CC has been littered with hitherto unknown players coming through and this may be needed again if they are to finish above the danger zone.



St Georges (last year: 4th) **“We aim to win the league”**

Captain: Zak Abbas

Overseas: Ashish Ashish (IND Top order bat and seam bowler)

The Dragons have undergone another transformation this winter with club captain Faisal Khan overseeing a big number of incomings and outgoings. Players departing include Sunny Singh, Azza Rafiq, Raheel Khattak and Faizan Khan, while the headline signing is former Allscott Pro Ashish Ashish, the all-rounder was instrumental in their 2023 promotion from Division One. Faisal himself will not be eligible for selection until June, but has appointed Zak Abbas as captain, who has previously plied his trade at Handsworth and Bridgnorth. Charitha Kumarasinghe is another marquee signing, he played a full season for Himley in the Birmingham Prem in 2025, as did Waqas Ahmed, while Ali Mustafa is reputed to be the fastest bowler in the Division. Completing the massive transformation are all-rounder Kasjuan Sullivan (also ex Handsworth), and opening bat Aqeeb Khan

Captains Views “Our realistic aim is to win the league, this is my first year at the Dragons, the boys had a good year last time finishing in the top half, and with the players we have added I think we can win it. This is my first year (in the SCCL) . I know there are some good sides, I see Quatt as dark horses and of course Wellington are a good side, it's going to be an exciting season and lots of fun!

One to Watch: Zab Safi is the biggest hitter I've ever seen outside the pro game, no boundary is big enough for him. It's great news for the SCCL that the Dragons have retained his services. He won't come off every week, but when he does expect serious fireworks.

My Verdict: Like last year they are bullish on their chances, but they clearly have the quality to back it up. However, starting with a 30pt deduction is surely too big an obstacle to overcome but expect a very strong season nonetheless with plenty more wins than losses.



Wellington (last year: champions) "**Hungry and determined**"

Captain: Dan Vaughan

Overseas: None, Jason Oakes is now a domestic player.

After falling well short in the play offs, Wellington are primed to go one better and achieve promotion, but first they have to defend the title they won so convincingly in 2025. Dan Vaughan is again at the helm for a 3rd season and after Brian Mudzinganyama flopped last year, they have avoided the overseas route for their professional and landed Jason Oakes who moves on after 5 years at Ludlow, while also bringing over David Laird from Newtown. Aside from that they will once again rely on a plethora of home-grown talent to maintain their title challenge, including star all-rounder Matt Simmonds, Luke Goring and Josh McDonald, while Ollie Smith and Hugh Morris who both played every game last year will presumably take the new ball.

Captains View: "We recognised our shortfalls from the play offs and the back end of the league campaign after Dan Lloyd departed and we identified Oakes and Laird as two really important signings for how we want to evolve the team, as both bring an element of experience and nous to a young side. I think it's a stronger league this year and there are a cluster of teams that should be vying at the top, I expect Allscott to go well, they did the double over us and having added Maz and kept Kuldeep they are well positioned to mount a challenge, but we are as hungry and determined as last season to have a successful season"

Ones to watch: Matthew Morris and Morgan Ward have been talked of for a year or two now, both are in the Worcester pathway and Vaughan believes both could make a big impact. "Matthew is a talented left arm seamer with a great temperament and is a more than useful bat, while Morgan's keeping is improving all the time, he played a full season for us last time, he showed glimpses with the bat and we are confident he will make a bigger impact this season"

My Verdict

Clearly, they start as favourites and in Oakes and Laird they have added 2 proven performers. A couple of possible concerns are that some weeks they will have talented players who would walk into other sides, twiddling their thumbs down the order and that kind of situation is not always easy to handle, having said that it is well within Dan Vaughan's skillset to manage it. Also, they are proven front runners, but we don't know how they will react if they get embroiled in a dogfight.



Wem (last year:2nd) **“Bringing on the next generation”**

Captain: James Astley

Overseas: Abhishek Reddy (IND Bat)

Another side upgrading their pro would appear to be Wem who announced before Christmas the signing of Abhishek Reddy. The 31 year old opens for his state Andhra in Indian first class cricket and has good numbers behind him. Whether he will open for his new club is an interesting dilemma for Jim Astley in his 2nd season at the helm, as the pair of Sam Peate and Harry Chandler were the best opening partnership in the division in 2025. But either way he will add to a very strong top four with Tyler Ibbotson also expected to contribute again. Chandler in particular has the ability to have a big season, now he is established in the county side where he surprisingly plays as a batter only, despite his outstanding glovework.

On the bowling front Alex Ollerenshaw is the new vice captain and will fill in for Astley in a number of games when he is away. Tom Astley was brilliant in 2024 but was carrying injuries in 2025 so wasn't at his best and if he can stay fit throughout, then he will form a quality new ball attack with Ollerenshaw. No doubt Ibbotson and his protégé Ralph Davies will get through plenty of overs, the latter will be hoping to carry on from his breakthrough season as SCCL young player of the year, while the captain and Harry Astley complete the bowling although expect the pro to turn his arm over most weeks.

Captains View: “We aim to bring a few more youngsters onto the first team stage at some point while maintaining a strong competitive performance. Got big hopes for Chandler and Abhishek as our star players. Wellington are the favourites but Quatt look strong again and will challenge”.

Ones to watch: Jim Astley highlights youngsters Eli Graves, Noah Quinn, Bobby Langton and Rufus Davies who could all come through in the next year or 2 to join the older Davies brother in what looks an exciting future for the club long term.

My Verdict. This looks the strongest top half of the Division in many years so they have a major job on to match last year's runners up spot. They play Quatt and Wellington in rounds 1 and 2 and that will give us a big indication of their strength, but I do wonder if this may be a transitional year at the club particularly as there appear to be some general availability issues.



Whitchurch (last year :9th) **“We are dark horses for the title”**

Captain: Mike Robinson.

Overseas: Kunal Dabas was previously an overseas but is now English qualified.

With Dan Bowen heading into (semi) retirement, Mike Robinson is back for a 2nd stint at the job after returning halfway through last season following a fairly successful 18 months at Shifnal. He leads a team that has recruited St Georges pair Muhammed Raheel Khattak and Azaad Rafiq, while Kunal Dabas is also back from playing in Cambridge for a few seasons to provide top order runs and useful off spin. With slow bowling options aplenty, (four offies, one leggie and a left armer), the pace attack will be led by Alex Heath, the young quick has made huge strides in the last 2 years, while there are high hopes for Shropshire junior star Ollie Dyson who will be hoping to nail down a regular spot in the middle order he also bowls very tidy off spin. The batting line up will have to manage without club legend Maz Hasnain whose move to Allscott was a surprise to many and leaves a huge gap, but also an opportunity for others like Iftikhar Khan, newly installed as vice captain, to take his game to the next level. The signing of Khattak looks a particularly shrewd one, he was something of an unsung hero at St Georges but contributed every week with bat and ball.

Captains View: “I believe we will challenge for the title, we have much of the 2024 champions still with us, and we have a good mix of experienced of youth and experience. Alex will be our main strike bowler and Shabbir Khan our leg spin guru will push him for most wickets. I’m excited to have Kunal back he is a matchwinner and has done very well in Cambridge, I think because we finished 9th last year we could be written off by some teams but we are confident. Since I came to the league in 2022 its clearly become stronger, players are coming from far and wide to play in the county, and that augurs well for Shropshire clubs holding their own ultimately in the Birmingham League.

Ones to Watch: Dyson and Heath are the poster boys of Shropshire youth cricket and will be backed to have big seasons.

My Verdict: I am not quite as confident of their prospects as the captain. A top four finish is a realistic aim but the squad depth doesn’t look great beyond the first choice 11. While like last year I would highlight lack of lower order runs as a major weakness. There is some real quality of course led from the captain at the top of the order and Shabbir is top drawer leg spinner but I sense the glory days aren’t coming back just yet.