

Umpire Mark Benson Retires from Emirates Elite Panel

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ICC umpire Mark Benson has retired from the Emirates Elite Panel and has decided to return home to England to take up a contract with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

Benson, who has been on the panel since 2006, has umpired a total of 27 Tests, 72 ODIs and 19 T20Is. In that time he stood in the final of the inaugural ICC World Twenty20 final in Johannesburg and was also shortlisted for Umpire of the Year at the LG ICC Awards in 2007 and 2008.

Although Benson's contract was not due to expire until the end of June 2010, he asked if he could be released from it three months early so he could take up a contract with the ECB and this request was granted.

"I have enjoyed my time on the elite panel immensely," said Benson.

"The opportunity to be part of the global game has given me memories that I will always treasure. But travel and being away from home takes its toll on the family and some warning bells have started to ring regarding my health.

"So, having thought about it carefully, I feel now is the right time for me to step down and move to a more settled and familiar environment in England.

"I'd like to thank the ICC and my umpiring colleagues on the elite panel for their support over the years. Umpiring at the top level has been a very rewarding experience for me and it is not an easy decision to walk away from it but I believe it is the right one as far as my health and family are concerned.

"I also want to thank the ECB for giving me the opportunity to be part of the county circuit again. I'm looking forward to the new season as much as I did when I played, and hope that I can add value with my international experience as an ICC elite umpire."

ICC Umpires' and Referees' Manager Vince van der Bijl said: "Mark's immense love for and enjoyment of cricket shines through his umpiring. His on-field calm demeanour will be missed, as will his friendly and easygoing disposition.

"We fully understand and support his decision, which was brought on by a desire to spend more time in England with his family and some concerns about health issues. He will add richly to the county circuit as he is a talented and hugely experienced umpire and we wish him great success."