

Compulsory heart check-ups for Swiss footballers

Switzerland's top footballers will have their hearts examined as part of new mandatory health checks carried out by their clubs, the official Swissinfo website reported.

Tuesday's decision comes shortly after the deaths of two sportsmen in Spain and Switzerland of cardiac arrest, the website said.

Europe's football governing body, UEFA, last year decided to insist on tests for teams involved in European competitions.

The Swiss Football League (SFL) announced the introduction of the measure this week. It is due to come into force next season and is part of its revised licensing rules for clubs under UEFA guidance.

'There were a number of cases in recent years that certainly prompted UEFA to introduce a series of measures that institutionalised medical checks,' said Claudius Schafer, head of SFL's legal services and licensing.

The death from heart failure of Cameroon's Marc-Vivien Foe in 2003 at the Confederations Cup sent the first warning to the football community at large, especially after two autopsies revealed no drugs or foul play.

UEFA reacted by demanding compulsory health checks for some competitions, in particular the UEFA Cup and the Champions League.

SFL has already chosen to extend checks to all the top division clubs, not just those taking part in European competitions. Teams will have to certify their players have undergone a full battery of tests to receive their licence.

'We want clubs to keep an eye on players' health during the season,' Schafer told Swissinfo.

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