



PFA Scotland has written to the International Football Board (IFAB) to ask that Scottish football be part of an extended trial for temporary concussions substitutes.

IFAB is the FIFA organisation that amends the Laws of the Game and has its general meeting at Loch Lomond this weekend.

The permanent substitutions we see in today's game are still part of a trial and PFA Scotland wants to see this officially made part of the Laws of the Game.

CEO Fraser Wishart said:

"The world players union FIFPRO and the World Leagues Forum, of whom the SPFL is a member have written jointly to IFAB asking for Scotland to be added to the list of countries involved in the next stage of the trials.

In Scotland we have seen first hand the successful trial of permanent substitutes which were an important step forward in player welfare and the safeguarding of our members.

We fully support the proposal that the Laws of the Game be changed to bring permanent substitutions into the Laws of the Game."

But Wishart and other player unions across the globe want IFAB to go further.

"Along with unions colleagues in England, Australia, France and the USA, we written to IFAB requesting that Scottish football be part of an extended trial of temporary substitutions. This is the next logical next step in protecting professional players in their workplace.

Unfortunately, there are still instances of players being put back on the field of play after the quick on field assessment, only to then have to be replaced later in the game. Having temporary substitutes would allow the experts more time to assess the injury to the player."

Whether IFAB accepts the unions' proposal remains to be seen but Scottish football is a position to influence the outcome. The four home nations, including the Scottish FA have two seats each in the 16 person IFAB and Wishart is adamant all football stakeholders must take action.

“The Scottish FA has taken some positive and welcome steps in the area of concussion. Heading has been banned for younger children and in the professional game training exercises involving a lot of heading are limited. We hope the Scottish FA and IFAB can allow us to participate in the extended the trial.

Medical experts have taken the lead on these matters and Wishart says the law makers have to listen.

“Our position is aligned with the Concussion in Sport Group which published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine that a sideline assessment of a potentially concussed player should take between 10 and 15 minutes.

In other sports such as rugby and cricket a more detailed assessment takes place at the side of the pitch. We feel football has an obligation to bring its rules into line.”

Research has shown that former professional footballers are between 3.5 and 5 times more likely to suffer from a neuro degenerative disease later in life

Wishart says everyone involved in the governance of the game has a duty of care for those playing the game professionally today.

“All stakeholders have a duty to work to protect our members’ health and safety in the workplace.

We all therefore have a duty to current and future players to mitigate the potential dangers and try to reduce those instances. Extending the trial of temporary substitutions should be the next step in this process.

Extending the trial would also send an important message to current players that the game’s stakeholders – unions, clubs, leagues, and governing bodies – do care about their health and safety and are working together on this matter”

Fraser Wishart.