

# **SPFL announces Covid-19 testing protocols for Betfred Cup and Challenge Cup**

**The Board of the Scottish Professional Football League has determined the Covid-19 testing regime that will be put in place for the Betfred Cup and the Challenge Cup this season.**

At present, all Premiership clubs are obliged to carry out RT-PCR (swab) testing of their squad in the 168 hours prior to kick-off for a Premiership match, with results made available to the SPFL by midday two days prior to the match. These arrangements will continue.



Photo: SPFL

There remains no requirement for routine swab testing in relation to Championship, League 1 or League 2 matches.

In relation to the Betfred Cup, a number of lower division and non-SPFL (and therefore non-swab testing) clubs will play against Premiership (swab testing) clubs this season. To minimise the risk of transmission to Premiership players, any team drawn against a Premiership club in the Betfred Cup this season will be required to swab test their players in the 168-hour period prior to that Betfred Cup fixture, with results provided to the League by midday two days prior to the tie.

As with Premiership league fixtures, any players who test positive would be required to self-isolate and would not be able to take part in the tie.

If a club is unable or unwilling to field a team in a Betfred Cup Round 1 group stage tie, or fails to provide sufficient negative test results, the club concerned will forfeit the match (on the basis of a 3-0 defeat).

The SPFL's Challenge Cup has, over its history, predominantly been a competition for the benefit of lower league clubs. It also noted that prize money in this competition is significantly less than for the Betfred Cup.

As a result, the SPFL Board does not consider it reasonable to impose a requirement on clubs to have to swab test, if they are drawn against a Colt team in the Challenge Cup.

However, the prospect of having their Colt team play against an untested team may concern Premiership clubs, due to the increased risk of transmission of Covid-19 into their playing 'bubble'.

The SPFL Board has therefore decided that:

- for any tie not involving a Colt team, there will be no requirement to swab test
- for any tie involving a Colt team, the Premiership club may elect for their opponent to have to swab test their squad in the 168 hours before kick-off, but at the cost of the Premiership club
- Premiership clubs may elect not to enter a Colt team in the Challenge Cup this season

As with the Betfred Cup, there is potential for a club not to (or not to be able to) play a tie. In these circumstances, the club concerned will forfeit the match, with their opponents automatically progressing to the next round.

Neil Doncaster, chief executive of the SPFL said: "The enormous efforts SPFL clubs are going to is a sign of the sport's determination to do everything humanly possible to

mitigate the impact of Covid19. The very future of many of our clubs depends on this comprehensive suite of steps to which clubs are rigorously adhering. The fact that Premiership clubs will pay for Covid-19 tests to be carried out by lower league opponents in the Challenge Cup is very positive. Everyone in our game knows we are all in this together and the fact that the game as a whole is taking a very collegiate and mature approach augurs very well for the future.”