

Shelley Kerr to miss UEFA EURO Qualifiers after requirement to self-isolate

The Scottish FA has confirmed that Scotland Women's Head Coach Shelley Kerr will miss the upcoming UEFA EURO Qualifiers away to Portugal and at home to Finland after being identified as a 'close contact' following positive tests recorded by members of the Scotland Under-21 staff and players.

The organisation has continued to liaise with members of Scottish Government's Elite Sport Covid Advisory Group (ESCAG) as part of that investigation process, the entire backroom team were retested over the weekend and we can confirm that two further positive tests had been returned. None of the backroom staff have been symptomatic at any point.



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In reviewing the aircraft and bus manifests, five further close contacts have been established from the backroom team and they are also now self-isolating. No additional players were identified as close contacts.

During the process, it also came to light that Kerr was identified as a close contact of one of the new positive cases despite following physical distance guidelines and protocols late last week.

It is the opinion of the ESCAG and the Scottish FA that notwithstanding physical distancing measures being observed, the potential risk of transmission cannot be completely ruled out and it is therefore appropriate to consider Shelley a close contact.

Shelley was informed this morning. She will therefore self-

isolate for 14 days and therefore be unable to take charge of the upcoming UEFA EURO Qualifiers away to Portugal and at home to Finland.

She will therefore engage with the players and staff on a remote basis over this period and the group will be led by Shelley's assistant, Andy Thomson, supported by Billy Stark and Paul Brownlie, the Scottish FA High Performance Manager who was involved with the Scotland Women's National Team throughout the Women's World Cup.

Ian Maxwell, the Scottish FA Chief Executive, confirmed the news to the squad today.

"Firstly, I would like to wish those who have tested positive for COVID-19 a safe and speedy recovery," he said. "Shelley is understandably devastated at not being able to be with the squad for such an important double-header. She has prepared extensively and meticulously with her support staff over a long period of time whilst following our protocols but will still play an active part in the preparation of the team, albeit remotely, and we have the utmost confidence in the players and staff to pull together and win their upcoming matches.

"In general terms, and as a former club Chief Executive, I can fully understand and empathise with the frustrations raised by clubs this weekend. Discovering on a matchday that players on international duty were considered close contacts of positive cases and therefore unavailable to the respective teams is hugely challenging to any club and I apologise for any and all disruption caused.

"It is important to clarify that the under-21 squad undertook four COVID tests on duty: one in the days prior to meeting and one on entry to the camp, both of which were in addition to the two official UEFA mandatory tests prior to each game.

"Each club may, as part of their own risk assessment,

undertake a test of their players on return from international duty and obviously three positive cases were recorded. At that point the respective club officials immediately contacted Dr John MacLean, who in turn informed the expert group to commence the customary investigation.

“I understand the question of an additional testing round but the clinical view is that this would not necessarily result in any additional positive tests being returned at that time due to the virus’s incubation period. In fact, all of the players tested upon going back to their clubs returned negative results, including two of the three who were to test positive later in the week. It was only tests undertaken later in the week that returned positive results. Equally, the expert group conducted a full analysis of the data after the index case and identified initial close contacts on that basis.

“We have conducted an examination of protocols undertaken throughout the under-21 camp and it is the view of our chief medical officer that they are in line with the established protocols outlined in the Return to Football documentation. However, given the number of positive cases and close contacts I have instructed a thorough review of all matters relating to the under-21 camp to give clubs, the association and government greater comfort. I will also be keen to work with the clubs to optimise elements of the protocol from their perspective, especially around departure from international duty.

“The events are especially disappointing given the A squad’s success in travelling to four different countries, including Scotland, for the recent triple-header with no positive cases reported. Our chief medical officer will continue to engage with his club counterparts and we have reminded all involved of the importance of adhering to all protocols at all times.”