

Russia Imposes Limit to Number of Foreign Players in Football Premier League

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Zenit St. Petersburg's Hulk celebrates after scoring a goal during the Europa League round of 32 second leg soccer match against PSV Eindhoven at the Petrovsky stadium in St. Petersburg on Feb. 26, 2015.

A new limit on the number of foreign players allowed in the Russian Premier League is to be introduced, the Russian Football Union (RFU) said on Tuesday.

From the new season which starts on Friday teams will be restricted to a limit six foreign players on the pitch at any one time.

"A new scheme was adopted almost unanimously, only one member of the executive committee abstained," acting RFU president Nikita Simonyan told reporters.

Under the old system a maximum of seven foreign players were permitted on the pitch.

The RFU announced last year that for the 2015-16 season teams would be allowed to name squads of 25 players, including a maximum of 10 foreigners, and that there would be no limit

on how many foreigners could be on the pitch.

But the Russian Sports Ministry opposed the move, Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko pointing out that this was against the interests of the development of the national team.

The Ministry recommended that the RFU introduced a 6+5 system, which was implemented at Tuesday's executive committee meeting.

The bigger clubs, including Zenit St Petersburg, CSKA Moscow and Lokomotiv Moscow were not in favor of the proposals.

"The new format will become the end of the development of Russian football," Zenit coach Andre Villas-Boas said.

"When you take away Hulk, Witsel, Javi Garcia, what will the Russian championship be left with? When one of the main players cannot play because of the limit, the others become lazy and do not want to fight for their place.

"The new system is the worst possible decision. It is the end of football," the Portuguese coach added.

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