

Football: Euro 2012 and Twitter - 'common sense' prevails

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With football one of the most talked-about sports, Twitter has become like an extra man to monitor when it comes to big tournaments like Euro 2012.

But while teams like reigning champions Spain initially banned their players from using the popular micro-blogging site during the tournament in Poland and Ukraine, for the most part football federations are following the example of Italy.

"There's no ban," one official said. "It's just a question of common sense."

What common sense means, though, depends on the country.

In a recent interview with the weekly Die Zeit, Germany coach Joachim Loew indicated that he had given "clear rules" to his squad on how to use [social networking sites](#).

"What goes on in the dressing room, what we talk about as a team, tactics, injuries and the rest of it are taboo, as are the [private lives](#) of team-mates or the management team," he was quoted as saying.

Asked if Germany officials would be discreetly monitoring whether the players followed the rules, Loew said only: "If anyone flouts the rules, he'll know about it. I don't need to surf the Internet to do that.

"No one's asked us to exercise self-restraint, only to be careful that what we say doesn't affect our team-mates or the French team," added France midfielder Florent Malouda. "It's more about being responsible than holding back.

"It (Twitter) is not a new thing. I've got an account myself and I hardly talk about football on it. You can talk about yourself but you've got to be careful not to get into anyone's private lives. But it's not banned."

England similarly have no ban in place, although supporters of the "Three Lions" put that down more to the fact that few international players are Twitter regulars.

Among the England starting XI that played against Belgium in a warm-up match last Saturday, only defender Glen Johnson tweeted regularly.

Spain's Twitter ban was announced, ironically, with a [tweet](#) from Fernando Llorente.

He told his followers at the weekend that he had to "say goodbye as we're not allowed to tweet from the training camp".

The ban appeared to have been short-lived as Cesc Fagregas wrote on Monday: "Good news! We're finally allowed to use social networks. We'll stay in touch during the Euro!"

However, for avid tweeters Nicklas Bendtner and Christian Eriksen there seems there will be no relaxation of the ban by Danish coach Morten Olsen, who has issued a blanket ban.

"There is so much communication during the championships that we want to limit it to meetings with the media," Danish football federation spokesman Lars Berendt said.

For Alexandre Fourtoy, communications director with European football's governing body UEFA, there is no general advice.

"But any player or journalist, for example, who films parts of the match on his phone and puts the images on Facebook or Twitter will have broken our broadcast rights rules and that could have consequences for their accreditation," he added.

"We're not restricting freedom of expression. Every team sets its own rules," he added. "If a player insults a referee on [Twitter](#), it's as if he's done it at a press conference and could see him subject to disciplinary sanctions.

"Social networks aren't anything new and UEFA is on them. Our monitoring allows us to watch what's happening. But we've rarely had any problems."

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