



Optimising footballer performance and health in the heat

Christopher J. Tyler

School of Human and Life Sciences,
University of Roehampton, London

Footballers competing in the upcoming UEFA Women’s Euro 2025 and FIFA Men’s World Cup 2026 will be required to compete in conditions that are likely to pose a threat to athlete performance and health (Draper et al., 2023).

Footballers at EURO 2025 will need to cope with high temperatures and UV Indexes while some footballers at the 2026 World Cup will play in very high temperatures, very high UV indexes, and high altitude. Elevated environmental stress will affect all players and staff, but fortunately the size of impact can be reduced by integrating careful planning, monitoring, and action.



Heat acclimation/acclimatisation involves repeated heat exposure to induce adaptations that lower physiological and perceptual strain during subsequent exercise (Tyler et al., 2024).



Take home messages

1

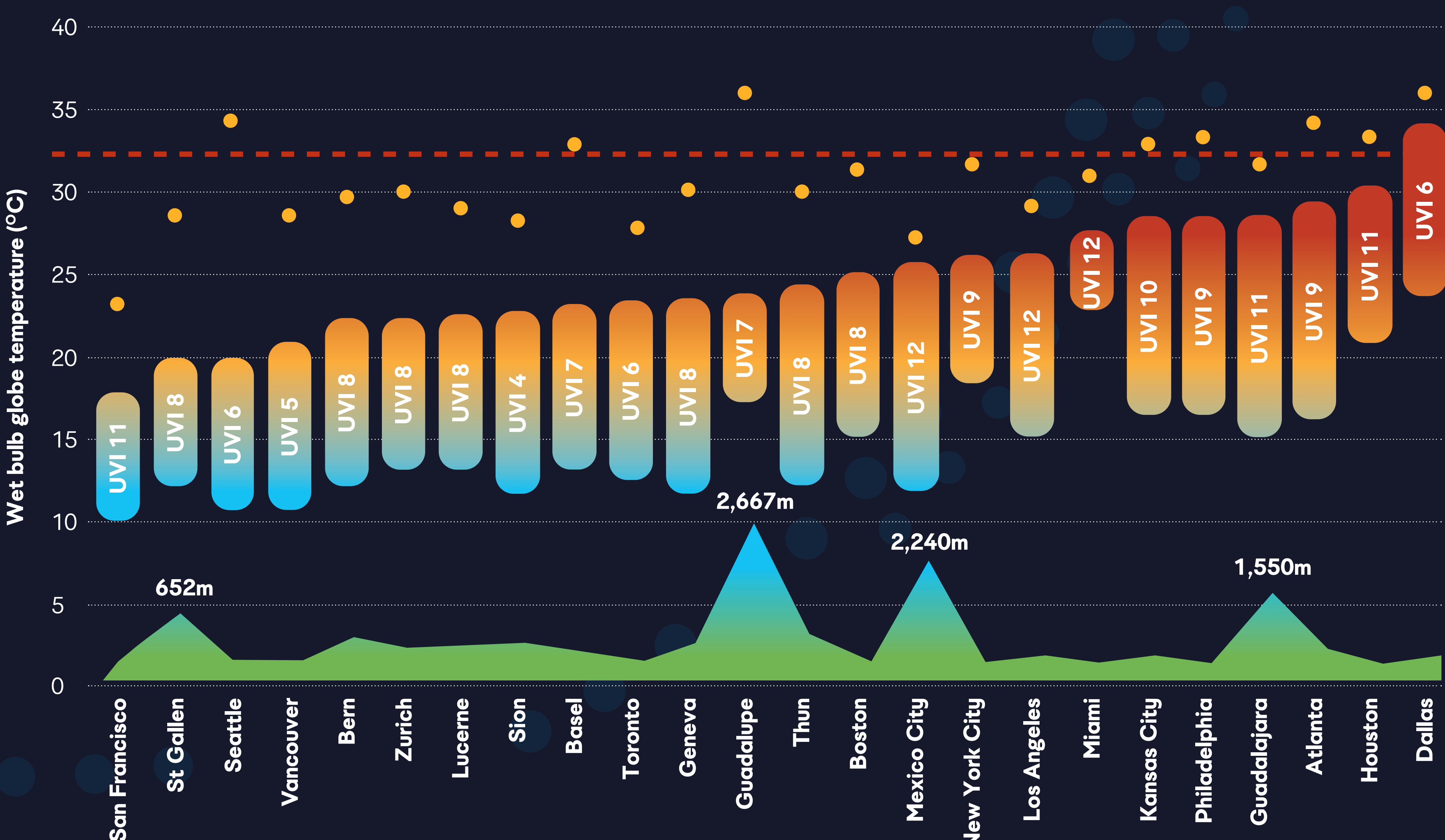
The temperatures expected at EURO 2025 and the 2026 World Cup are likely to impair performance (physical and cognitive) and pose a threat to the health of the players, staff, officials, and spectators.

2

Altitude is unlikely to be an issue at EURO 2025, but teams playing in Mexico at the 2026 World Cup will need to consider the additional stress placed on the players and staff by the altitude (~1,550 – 2,700 m).

3

All national teams should prepare for the additional challenges posed by the high temperatures and elevations expected at EURO 2025 and/or the 2026 World Cup. Nations should undertake acclimation/acclimatisation prior to competition and have a cooling and hydration plan in place.



References
Draper et al. (2023). Do environmental temperatures and altitudes affect physical outputs of elite football athletes in match conditions? A systematic review of the 'real world' studies. Science and Medicine in Football, 7(1), 81 – 92.
Nassis et al. (2024). In-match strategies to mitigate the effect of heat on football (soccer) players' health and performance. British Journal of Sports Medicine, 58 (11), 572 – 573.
Tyler et al. (2024). Effects of Heat Adaptation on Physiology, Perception, and Exercise Performance in the Heat: An Updated Meta-Analysis. Journal of Science in Sport and Exercise, 6, 195 – 217.

