

Mechanics Points of Emphasis

Game and Play Clocks

(Source: CCA Football Officiating Manual Pages 24 thru 28)

Two significant rule changes will have a significant effect on officials. It will entail breaking some old habits and adjusting others.

Play clocks will be set up to time not only a 25-second interval but a 40-second interval as well. When the 40-second interval is in force, the referee will not blow his whistle and give the ready-for-play signal as was done in the past. Instead, the referee will give the start-the-clock signal when the ball is placed on the field for the next snap.

That will also entail referees being more involved in the ball relay than they have become accustomed to being. Instead of waiting for the ball to be placed by the umpire, the referee will sometimes be the official setting the ball on the ground. That will most often occur when the ball ends up out of bounds or becomes dead between the numbers and the sideline. The umpire will receive the new ball from the wing official and relay it to the referee at the hashmark.

The game clock will run at times it formerly did not. Specifically, except for the last two minutes of either half, the clock will stop when a ball carrier (a ball carrier in possession of a live ball, a fumble or a backward pass goes out of bounds. But the game clock will restart when the ball is placed and the referee signals the clock to restart. In the past, the clock would have started on the snap in those situations. Also, anytime a fumble goes out of bounds in advance of the spot of the fumble, regardless of game time, the game clock will start on the referee's signal.

When the 40-second interval is in force, officials' signals will serve as the trigger for the play clock operator to start the play clock. A new signal will be used - one arm raised completely above the shoulder with the hand open and the palm facing forward will inform the play clock operator that the 40-second interval should begin. It is acceptable for the covering official, after giving that signal, to then indicate with his hand the next down.

When a pass is incomplete, team A has gained a first down or a ball carrier goes out of bounds, the appropriate signals will cause the timer to start the 40-second clock. In those instances, the raised hand is not necessary.

Note the following examples.

After the opening kickoff, team A begins a series at its own 20 yardline. Because there has been a change of possession, the play clock is set to 25 seconds and it starts when the referee blows the ready. The game clock does not start until the snap.

The first play is a run off tackle for a gain of three yards, ending between the hashmarks. The covering official blows his whistle and raises his hand. The 40-second interval then begins. Because the play ended between the hashes, the umpire sets the ball for the next play. The referee does not give a ready signal or blow his whistle because the play and game clocks are already running.

The second-down play is an incomplete pass deep in the side judge's coverage area. Note the covering official would likely be the back judge in a five-official crew. The 40-second interval begins when the official signals the incomplete pass. The raised hand is not necessary in that case. A new ball is obtained from the ballboy by the appropriate wing official, who tosses it to the umpire, who has come toward the sideline to obtain the ball. The ball is relayed to the referee, who places it at the previous spot for the next play. Because the play clock is running but the game clock does not start, the referee makes no signal.

On third down, a running play results in a gain of 14 yards. The ball is declared dead when the ball carrier steps out of bounds. The 40-second interval begins when the covering official signals the clock to stop. The raised hand is not necessary in that case. The referee signals the first down. The ball is relayed to the referee in a fashion similar to the manner in which it was on second down. When the chains are in place, the linesman should give a nod or other signal to the umpire, who verbally or visually signals the referee the chains are ready. Because the running play ended out of bounds, the referee gives the start the-clock signal. (No whistle accompanies the signal.) **NOTE: This was changed at a CCA Meeting in early June. When either clock (game or play) is to be started on the R's signal, the R is to also sound his whistle.**

Other situations. If the play clock must be reset to 25 seconds, the referee will indicate that by making a pumping motion, alternately raising and lowering one arm, palm flat and pointed toward the sky. If the play clock is to be reset to 40 seconds, the referee makes the same signal with both hands.

Play clock operators should be instructed that they are to react to those signals only from the referee. Another official may communicate a play clock problem to the referee by using one of those signals, but only the referee's signal should result in the play clock being reset.

In order to adjust the game clock when it has been running, there must be more than a five-second differential if there is more than five minutes remaining in either half. Any time loss due to the clock being started erroneously, such as when a dead-ball foul is called, must result in the clock being adjusted.

If there is a delay in placing the ball and the 40-second clock has run down to 20, the referee declares a referee's timeout, has the play clock reset to 25, then gives the ready. The game clock starts on the snap unless it had been running when the referee declared a timeout.

As an aid to officials and to play clock operators, the procedure-which details which play clock interval is appropriate for which situations - is printed in the following pages. It may be copied and presented to the clock operators before the game. A smaller version of the list is also provided for the official to copy, laminate and take onto the field for reference. A summary of new game clock procedures is included as well.

Because the timers will have to adjust to the new rules, it is recommended that the official who talks to the timers before the game spend a little extra time (particularly early in the season) to better acclimate the timers to the new procedures.

40/25-Second Play Clock For Timers

(Source: CCA Football Officiating Manual Page 35)

The play clock will be automatically reset to **40 seconds** at the end of each play. The covering official's signal will designate when to start the play clock.

When the ball is declared dead in field of play on a play from scrimmage:

Play clock starts when covering official raises his arm or gives a wind signal if near the sideline.

Incomplete pass: Play clock starts when covering official signals incomplete pass.

Ball dead out of bounds: Play clock starts when covering official signals to stop the game clock.

The play clock will be manually set to **25 seconds** when these occur or upon signal from referee (one hand pump above head, or the referee's ready for play signal):

- Penalty administration
- Charged team timeout
- Media timeout
- Injury timeout
- Measurement
- Change of possession
- Try for extra point
- Start of each period
- Start of possession series in extra period
- Instant replay review
- Kickoff or safety kick
- Other administrative stoppage

Special Situations

On a delay of game penalty, keep the play clock at :00 until the penalty is completed.

If the play clock hits :00 and there is no delay of game, reset to 40 seconds immediately after the snap, then wait for the appropriate signal to start the play clock.

If play clocks are not synchronized, or if one fails, the clocks must be turned off and the appropriate official will be responsible.

On kickoffs and free kicks after a safety, the play clock starts on the ready for play signal by the referee. If the kickoff does not occur before the 25-second play clock elapses and a delay foul is called, the same procedure will be followed. Officials have the authority to reset the play clock to 25 seconds if the wind blows the ball off the tee or other circumstances warrant. Watch for arm pump signal by referee.

Under no circumstances should the play Clock be reset to 25 seconds upon a signal by any official other than the referee. It is common practice for officials to communicate to the referee to "ask" if he wants to consider resetting by making the pumping signal. Resetting is the sole discretion of the referee.

If there is a delay in placing the ball and the play clock is under 20, the referee will signal the game clock to stop and signal the play clock to be reset to 25.

40/25-Second Play Clock For Officials

(Source: CCA Football Officiating Manual Page 36)

The play clock will be automatically reset to 40 seconds at the end of each play. The covering official's signal will designate when to start the play clock.

When the ball is declared dead in field of play on a play from scrimmage: Play clock starts when covering official raises his arm or gives a wind signal if near the sideline.

Incomplete pass: Play clock starts when covering official signals incomplete pass.

Ball dead out of bounds: Play clock starts when covering official signals to stop the game clock.

The play clock will be manually set to 25 seconds when these occur or upon signal from referee (one hand pump above head, or the referee's ready for play signal):

- Penalty administration
- Charged team timeout
- Media timeout
- Injury timeout
- Measurement
- Change of possession
- Try for extra point
- Start of each period
- Start of possession series in extra period
- Instant replay review
- Kickoff or safety kick
- Other administrative stoppage

Game Clock Procedures For Timers

(Source: CCA Football Officiating Manual Page 37)

The game clock starts on the referee's start the clock signal after:

- A player in possession of the ball goes out of bounds
- A fumble, or
- A backward pass goes out of bounds

NOTE: The rule **does not apply** in the last two minutes of either half.

The game clock starts on the referee's start the clock signal after:

- A fumble forward and out of bounds **anytime during the game** (even the last two minutes of either half).

If there is a delay in placing the ball and the 40-second clock has run down to 20, the referee declares a referee's timeout, has the play clock reset to 25, then gives the ready.

The game clock starts on the snap unless it had been running when the referee declared a timeout.