

# Working With the Timers

(Source: CCA Football Officiating Manual Pages 90 thru 93)

The electric game clock and play clock operators are integral members of the officiating crew and game administration. Unfair advantages occur when the clocks are not started or stopped promptly. Great care must be exercised to see that no time lag occurs in starting or stopping the clocks.

## Game Clock

The game clock operator will report to the referee and side judge 60 minutes prior to the game. The clock operator is to inform them if he will be located in the press box or on the sideline, and to confirm the procedure the officials should use for communicating with the timer during the game.

All pregame and halftime activities will be synchronized with the official game clock. The clock operator should start the game clock 60 minutes before game time. The 20-minute halftime intermission will be timed on the game clock. The game clock starts when the referee gives the start-the-clock signal immediately after the second period ends.

The electric clock operator must have an extra stopwatch available in case the game clock malfunctions. The clock operator must immediately contact the officials by whatever means possible, giving them the correct data regarding the official time. The side judge will then pick up the correct game time on his stopwatch.

Should the game clock become inoperative, the public address announcer will indicate to the crowd that the game clock will not be official until the malfunction is corrected and subsequent announcement made over the P.A. system. The side judge will alert the announcer concerning remaining time as often as possible.

The game clock should be stopped whenever a team or an official's timeout is charged, after any score, when a live ball goes out of bounds, on a penalty, when either team is awarded a first down, or following an incomplete pass. Officials are required to glance at the clock in those situations to ensure that the clock is stopped.

If the game clock has been stopped, it will be started if the referee gives the start-the-clock signal. It will be started on the snap if the referee does not give the start-the-clock signal.

When the 40-second interval applies and the game clock is to start when the ball is spotted, the referee will no longer need to blow his whistle and signal the ready for play. Once the ball is spotted, the referee need only give the start-the-clock signal without blowing his whistle. When the 25-second clock is in force, the referee will give the traditional ready 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.*

On all free kicks, the clock starts when the ball is legally touched in the field of play, unless the ball is caught or recovered by a player who is legally down.

The timer should be reminded that the clock is not to be stopped on plays near a boundary line unless an official signals the clock to stop. Many times the ball goes out of bounds after having been declared dead in the field of play and no timeout legally occurs. If a pass is touched or caught out of bounds, the incompleteness signal will stop the clock. On plays that end near the sideline inbounds in advance of the line to gain, the covering official should give the stop the clock signal only; do not wind the clock.

Remind the timer that the official who declares the ball dead will be the first official to signal a timeout when the team in possession of the ball meets the requirements for first down. It is important for the clock operator to key on that official, since the clock will usually stop on long gainers.

Other reminders:

- Any official may signal a team timeout, so be alert to stop the clock.
- In case of a pile-up anywhere on the field, be alert for an official's signal to stop the clock. Once the congestion has cleared, the referee will start the clock again before the ready signal.
- The game clock should not be stopped if the play clock is started in error.
- When the period officially ends, the referee holds the ball above his head.

## **Play Clocks**

When play clocks are available, they are the official delay-of-game timepiece. The play clock operator will report to the referee and back judge at least 90 minutes prior to the game. He should be instructed to set the displays to either 25 or 40 seconds and to start the clocks at the proper time.

If an unusual situation delays the placing of the ball and the 40-second clock has run down to 20 seconds, the referee should have the clock reset to 25 seconds. The referee shall declare a timeout and signal that the play clock be set at 25 seconds by alternately raising and lowering his arm in a pumping motion with his palm flat and facing up. When play is to be resumed, the referee will give the ready-for-play signal and the play clock shall begin the 25-second count. The game clock will start on the snap unless it had been running when the referee declared a timeout; in that case it will start on the referee's signal. If the referee must reset the clock to 40 seconds, the signal is made with both arms.

When the clock expires and there is a delay of game penalty, the display should be left at zero. When the ball is put in play and there is no delay foul, or if the referee interrupts the 25/40-second count, the displays should be immediately reset.

At the end of a period, the play clock should be shut off if there is less time on the game clock than the proper time on the play clock.

If there is a malfunction, the play clocks will be turned off until the problem is corrected. Both coaches will be notified if the field play clock is no longer official. The 25/40-second count will then be restarted at 25 seconds with the back judge manually timing the count his watch. The back judge should raise one arm straight overhead during the last 10 seconds of the manual count.

When the ball becomes dead inbounds, the covering official uses the same signal to denote the end of the play. That is a signal to the timer that the play clock should be started. Note: That signal does not kill the ball. It is to be given after the ball is already dead.

The referee should employ the 5/5 axiom: 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. When any time is lost due to the game clock being started erroneously, such as when a dead ball foul is called, the game clock must be adjusted.