

Game Clock / Play Clock Procedures

Please have both clock operators go meet with the Referee prior to each varsity contest.

This document includes a set of instructions for the clock operators to assist with the recent rule change to the play clock that now involves a 40 / 25 second possibility for a delay of game. This 2-page document includes the instructions for the 40 second and the 25 second play clock to be used if and when visible play clocks are available to be used.

NOTE to the play clock operator: starting the 40 second play clock “immediately” is to be interpreted as starting the 40 seconds as quickly as the covering official signals the end of the down using signal #3 (time-out) or signal #7 (dead ball with one arm straight up) or signal #10 (incomplete pass). These are the only 3 signals you should expect at the end of a down prior to the 40 second play clock starting.

The following addresses the play situations that require the 40 second option.

1. The team A (offense) runner is stopped in bounds short of a first down. The **game clock** continues to run and the **40 second play clock** is started immediately except at the end of a 4th down.
2. The team A (offense) runner is stopped in bounds beyond the line-to-gain (first down). The **game clock** is stopped for the first down and the **40 second play clock** is started immediately. The Referee will then restart (wind) the **game clock** (no whistle involved) as quickly as the football is placed on the ground and ready for play.
3. The team A (offense) runner OR a team A fumble OR a team A backward pass goes out of bounds. The **game clock** is stopped and the **40 second play clock** is started immediately. The **game clock** will not start again until the next legal snap.
4. A team A (offense) legal, forward pass is incomplete. The **game clock** is stopped and the **40 second play clock** is started immediately. The **game clock** will not start again until the next legal snap.
5. A double change of possession during the down occurs resulting in team A in possession at the end of the down. The **game clock** is stopped for a first down and the **40 second play clock** is started immediately. The **game clock** may then be restarted (wind with no whistle) or not depending on whether out-of-bounds was a factor. (Example: team A’s forward pass is intercepted and team B then fumbles during their return and team A recovers.)

There is no signal/whistle from the Referee during the 40 seconds except to restart the game clock following a first down inbounds. It is important to note that none of the situations listed above involve an administrative stop / interruption in play. All of those possibilities are addressed on page 2 of this document.

Administrative Stoppages / Interruptions

It is always possible for the situations that are listed below to occur during the game that are common **administrative issues / interruptions** to the normal flow of play. Please note that this list does not necessarily include every possibility.

NOTE to the play clock operator: Every situation listed below will result in a 25 second play clock that is **NOT** started immediately at any time, but you will wait until the situation has been addressed and the Referee will then utilize signal #1 which is the very common ready-for-play signal (with his whistle sounded) or signal #2 (wind) which restarts both clocks (with his whistle sounded).

Game Situations:

- *either team is granted a **timeout**
- *any down that involves a **score**
- *any down that includes a **legal kick**
- *team **possession changes** during or after a down
- *an **inadvertent whistle**
- *any **foul** occurs
- *play is stopped for an **injured player**
- *a player's **helmet** has come completely **off**
- *a **measurement** for a first down
- *the **beginning of any period**
- *an **untimed down**

This list includes most every 25 second play clock situation, but an extremely rare situation is also a possibility (a dog runs across the field; the lights go out; weather conditions).

General Statements:

1. Always set the **play clock** back to 40 during a down in progress. You will have plenty of time to change it back to 25 at the end of the down if necessary.
2. The common ready-for-play whistle/signal is **not** used for a **40 second play clock**.
3. It is very important that the same individual in the press box is not responsible for both clocks!!! **An official on the field with be responsible for the play clock if and when visible play clocks are not available to be used.**
4. The **game clock** operator must always be ready for the Referee to wind/start the **game clock** when it is stopped. The **game clock** will always start on a legal snap if it is not already started/running prior to the legal snap.
5. **Always** turn off any scoreboard horn. There is absolutely no need for a horn at any time!
6. Make certain that we **always** run the **25 second play clock** prior to an extra point try, prior to a kickoff, and prior to the kick following a safety.

FINALLY, the play clock operator must always be ready for the Referee to reset the 40 second clock to 25 seconds if and when the 40 seconds has run down past and below 25 seconds and the football is still not yet on the ground ready for the next down. The Referee's signal for this is a pumping motion with one hand up and down near his head.