



# **INSTRUCTIONS FOR GAME CLOCK OPERATORS**

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## Instructions for Game Clock Operators

EFAF

A Game Clock Operator in football has a very important job. In few sports is the clock such an important part of tactics, as it is in football. It is therefore of great importance that all Game Clock Operators (GCO) have sufficient knowledge of their tasks and how to perform them. These instructions deal with both the tasks of the GCO and the Play Clock Operator (PCO). Their tasks are different, and are handled by two different people. They are dealt with separately.

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## THE GAME GLOCK OPERATOR

The GCO has a very important job, and it is vital that he is fully focused on the game and on the officials' signals at all time. The clock must be stopped or started immediately when the rules, or officials, require it. One team will always get an undeserved advantage if the GCO is sloppy.

### BEFORE THE GAME

The GCO must be familiar with the control panel for the clock in question. If the clock or the controls are new to the GCO, he must arrive at the arena even earlier than normal so that he has time to become comfortable with how the clock is to be operated, especially as clock corrections are concerned. The GCO may not be substituted during the game, unless requested by the officials. The GCO will meet with the officials 60-45 minutes prior to the start of the game in the officials locker room (unless otherwise agreed with the Referee). The GCO will confirm the following with the Back Judge (Field Judge on a 6-man crew):

- What time it is (synchronize watches),
- How long the periods are,
- How long the halftime intermission is,
- Exactly where the GCO will be during the game,
- How to correct the clock and communicate with the GCO during the game,
- Clarify and ask any questions the GCO might have.

The clock will then be set to 30:00, and exactly 30 minutes before the scheduled time for the kick off, it shall be started. This is done so that teams, officials and the game administration can coordinate their pre-game activities properly. When the clock has reached 0:00, it shall be made ready for the start of the game and be set to the correct period length.

### DURING THE GAME

#### **When to start the clock**

The main rule is that the clock starts when the ball is put into play, or when the Referee gives the signal to start the clock. We will examine some different situations:

#### Free Kick

All games start with a kick off, or free kick which is the correct name. On all free kicks, the clock shall start when a player in the field of play legally touches the ball. The official with the ball in his area will signal when the clock should start,

so look for his signal (see picture below). Wait for that signal before starting the clock.

\*Start the clock (S2):



### Scrimmage Plays

On a scrimmage play, the clock starts (if stopped) on the snap, or when the Referee signals for the clock to start (often, but not always, at the same time he declares the ball ready for play and blows his whistle):

\*Start the clock (S2):



### Tries

The clock does not run during a try (PAT).

### Extra Periods

If extra periods are to be played, the clock shall be set to 0:00 and not be used for the remainder of the game. The score board as such will continue to be used. If the score board is equipped with a period indicator, it should be used if possible.

### **When to stop the clock**

The clock shall be stopped when anything of the following happens (abbreviated list):

- When a team scores a touchdown, a field goal, a safety or when a touchback occurs.
- When there is a team, officials' or injury timeout.
- After a play during which a flag was thrown, or if thrown before the snap, immediately.
- When the ball or runner crosses the sideline (or endline).

- When a forward pass is incomplete.
- When any team gets a first down (clock always stops after a 4<sup>th</sup> down).
- After a play containing a kick (scrimmage kick or free kick).
- When the runner loses his helmet.

The officials will indicate this with the following signals, and the clock shall be stopped immediately when the signal is given:

\*Touchdown or field goal (S5):



\*Safety (S6):



\*Time-out (not only for team time-out, but for most situations where the clock stops). In case of a touchback, this signal is given with one hand (S3 (S7)):



\*Incomplete forward pass (S10):



Most of the time, the official closest to the ball when it becomes dead will signal for the clock to stop, for example for a first down or a score. However, you must be aware of that any official can stop the clock for a foul, team time-out or other situation. You must be aware of this so that you do not miss that signal.

If the ball becomes dead without any official giving any signal that stops the clock, the clock will continue to run. The official(s) closest to the ball will

sometimes, when the ball becomes dead close to a sideline, indicate that the ball was dead inbounds and that the clock should continue to run by giving the signal for starting the clock (S2).

If there is a conflict between signals given, such as one official signals the clock to continue to run and another signals time-out, the clock shall be stopped. Look to the Referee who will then signal the clock to start again if the clock was incorrectly stopped.

The Referee can decide to stop using the stadium clock. He will signal this by giving a "throat cutting" motion with his hand. The clock shall then either be switched off or set to 0:00. The score board shall continue to be used if possible.

## END OF PERIODS

When a period has ended, the clock may not be set for the next period until the Referee has signalled that the period has ended:

\*End of period (S14):



Only after this signal has been given may the clock be set for the next period, or half time. Remember to correct the number of the period, if the score board has that feature.

## HALF TIME

When the signal for end of period is given after the 2<sup>nd</sup> period, the clock shall be set to 20:00 and started immediately. However, the Referee can (before the game) ask you to hold the half time countdown until he gives the the signal to start the clock (S2). Half time is always 20 minutes long, except if you have been advised differently before the game by the Referee or the Back Judge.

## SCORE

The GCO is also normally responsible for controlling the score on the score board. When there is a score, wait until the Referee confirms the score by giving the scoring signal (S5 or S6) towards the press box. After the Referee has confirmed the score, adjust the score board accordingly.

## TECHNICAL MALFUNCTIONS

If there is a technical malfunction, and the game continues without the use of the stadium clock, and later the clock is repaired, the clock will normally not be used again until the start of the next period. The Referee will announce, using his radio microphone, that the clock will be kept by the officials on the field. If the clock is taken into use again, the Referee will then announce this.

### **25-SECOND CLOCK OPERATOR (PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR, PCO)**

The PCO has a very important job, and it is vital that he is fully focused on the game and on the officials' signals at all time. The clock must be stopped or started immediately when the rules, or officials, require it. One team will always get an undeserved advantage if the PCO is sloppy.

#### BEFORE THE GAME

The PCO must be familiar with the control panel for the clock in question. If the clock or the controls are new to the PCO, he must arrive at the arena even earlier than normal so that he has time to become comfortable with how the clock is to be operated. The PCO may not be substituted during the game, unless requested by the officials. The PCO will meet with the officials 60-45 minutes prior to the start of the game in the officials locker room (unless otherwise agreed with the Referee). The PCO will confirm the following with the Side Judge (Back Judge on a 5-man crew):

- Exactly where the PCO will be during the game,
- How to correct the clock (reset) during the game,
- Clarify and ask any questions the GCO might have.

#### DURING THE GAME

##### **When to start the clock**

The 25-second clock shall start immediately when the ball is spotted for the next play, and the Referee (the official wearing the white hat) blows the whistle while giving one of the following signals:

\*Ball ready for play (S1):



\*Start the clock (S2):



This applies to **all** plays, including free kicks and tries. Note that the play clock shall not be used if the game clock is running and there is less than 25 seconds remaining in the period.

### **When to reset the 25-second clock**

*Note: "Reset" means that the clock is set back to 25 seconds and stops there!*

If the ball is put into play before the clock reaches zero, the clock shall be reset immediately after the ball is put into play. The clock shall also be reset if the officials interrupt the game before the snap, such as in the case of a false start or other dead ball foul.

If the clock reaches zero before the ball is put into play, and a team is to be penalized for delay of game, the play clock is to remain at zero until the Referee has completed his announcement or the Umpire has enforced the penalty, whichever happens last.

If you believe that the clock reached zero, but the officials let the play start without calling a foul, you will nevertheless reset the clock when you realize that there will be no penalty. The PCO does not call or enforce penalties, and must at all times follow the judgement of the officials.

### **Resetting the clock if started incorrectly**

The Referee can order the 25-second clock to be reset, for example if it is started too soon. The Referee will signal this by raising and lowering (a pumping motion) one arm above his head with the palm of that hand facing upwards and horizontal. When that signal is given, the 25-second clock must be reset immediately.

## **APPENDIX 1 – LENGTH OF PERIODS**

These are the standard length of periods. In tournament play, and some other situations, these times may vary. The Referee or the official responsible for game timing is responsible for advising the GCO of the length of periods.

Seniors - 12 minute periods

Juniors - 10 minute periods

Half time is always 20 minutes unless advised differently.

## **APPENDIX 2 – “QUICK REF” OFFICIALS SIGNALS AND THE CLOCK**

### **Signals that stops the clock**

\*Touchdown or field goal (S5):



\*Safety (S6):



\*Time-out (not only for team time-out, but for most situations where the clock stops). In case of a touchback, this signal is given with one hand (S3 (S7)):



\*Incomplete forward pass (S10):



### **Signals that starts the clock**

\*Start the clock (S2):



### **Signals that starts the 25-second clock**

*Note! Only when given by the Referee simultaneous with him blowing his whistle!*

\*Ball ready for play (S1):



\*Start the clock (S2):

