



40/25-second play clocks (2015 BAFA/BAFRA changes)

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1 Introduction

The change to Rule 3-2-4 means that 40/25-second play clocks will be used in all games from now on. (Previously we only used a 40-second clock if there were visible stadium play clocks.)

An official on the field will keep the 40-second clock and signal or verbalize when 10 seconds remain.

2 Reminder of the rule (3-2-4-b and c)

Use 40-second clock after ...	Use 25-second clock after ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> most situations when the ball becomes dead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> team (or media) timeout penalty administration, measurements, replay review or any other administrative stoppage score, change of possession, kick down, start of period (including extra)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an injury or helmet off to a defensive player (only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an injury or helmet off to an offensive player (or both teams)

3 Clock responsibilities

In a change to the *Manual of Football Officiating*, the clock responsibilities will become:

	3-man	4-man	5-man	6-man	7-man	8-man
Game	LJ	LJ	LJ	FJ	FJ	FJ
Play	R	R	BJ	SJ	BJ	BJ

4 Play clock official (referee)

Referees are very used to running the 25-second clock and that will not change. The additional responsibility is to start a 40-second clock after most plays when the ball becomes dead. The referee needs a watch or timer that can be set or adapted easily.

As before, the referee will give a verbal warning ("10 seconds") when approximately 10 seconds remain. This applies whether they are timing 25 or 40 seconds.

5 Play clock official (back judge or side judge)

The official will start the 40-second clock after most plays when the ball becomes dead, or a 25-second clock on the ready for play after a stoppage. The official needs a watch or timer that can be set or adapted easily.

When approximately 10 seconds remain on the play clock, the official will raise a hand high in the air (signal S7) until either the ball is snapped or a delay of game flag is thrown. The referee must accompany this by a verbal warning ("10 seconds" or "hurry" if the referee is not sure how many of the 10 seconds have expired). These apply whether they are timing 25 or 40 seconds.

There has been discussion about whether we should also give a 5-second signal, but we have decided NOT to do that. Teams don't currently get that warning verbally.

6 Other officials

The covering official needs to signal when the ball is dead and the 40-second clock should start. If a pass is incomplete, this will be as before using the incomplete pass signal (S10). If the ball carrier goes out of bounds, or first down yardage is achieved, this will be as before using the timeout signal (S3).

If the play ends in bounds and the game clock keeps running, the covering official needs to give the dead ball signal (S7).

The play clock operator will start the 40-second clock when he sees one of these signals. If the play clock operator is also the covering official, he should give the signal before starting the play clock.

7 Declaring the ball ready for play

Normally, if the 40-second play clock is running, the ball will become ready for play when the spotting official (umpire, referee, centre judge or whoever) steps away from it. There is no need for a whistle or signal. (Rule 2-2-4-a)

If a 25-second clock applies (or 40-second clock after a defensive injury or helmet off), the ball will become ready for play, as at present when the referee either signals ready for play (S1) or start the game clock (S2). (Rule 2-2-4-b)

When the game clock is stopped when the ball goes out of bounds or to award Team A a first down, the play clock will start at 40 seconds. When the ball has been spotted (and the chains are in position), the referee will need to wind (S2) to signal to start the game clock. A short toot on the whistle is permissible to emphasise that the clock has started.

If for any reason, spotting the ball has been delayed and the ball is not ready for play within the first 20 seconds of the 40-second count, the play clock operator will:

1. declare a timeout
2. signal to reset the play clock to 25 seconds (Sup29)

The referee will then

3. declare the ball ready for play in the conventional manner

The clock will start on the ready if it was stopped only for this reason, or start on the snap if it wasn't already running. (Rule 3-2-4-b-3)

If the play clock doesn't start when it should, the referee will:

1. declare a timeout
2. signal to reset the play clock to 40 seconds (Sup30)

The play clock will start immediately. The game clock (if not stopped for a reason that restarts it on the snap) will be started when the ball is ready (like for out of bounds or moving the chains). (Rule 3-2-4-b-2)

8 Briefing the teams

It is crucial that you inform each team before the game:

- which official has the play clock; and
- whether or not they should look for visual signals

This should be covered in the pre-game meeting with the head coach. The referee may also want to talk to the QB about it at the first opportunity.

For the first game under the new rules, you should also brief the head coach about when the ball will be considered ready for play.

9 Summary

When a 40-second play clock applies ...	When a 25-second play clock applies ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starts shortly after an official signals that the ball is dead • ball becomes ready for play when spotting official steps away from it • play clock interrupted if ball not ready within 20 seconds • play clock operator signals or verbalizes when 10 seconds remain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starts when referee declares ball ready for play • play clock operator signals or verbalizes when 10 seconds remain