

# FHSAA / NFHS 40 Second Play Clock

## 40 Second Play Clock

The 40 second play clock will provide more consistency as the ball must be snapped within 40 seconds after the end of the previous play and is not dependent on the Referee's subjective signal. This will be used for all varsity and sub-varsity games.

YOU DO NOT NEED A VISIBLE PLAY CLOCK ON YOUR FIELD FOR THIS TO WORK.

In the case where play is continuing with no stoppage or interruption, the offense will have 40 seconds from the end of the previous play to snap the ball. If play has been stopped (timeout, change of team possession, penalty, etc.), the offense will have 25 seconds from the time the Umpire spots the ball and the Referee starts the ready for play following administration of the penalty, timeout, etc.

Basic Premise: The play clock will ALWAYS start at 40 seconds and will be started by the Back Judge within 3 seconds of the end of the previous play unless there is an administrative stoppage.

The following represent administrative stoppage situations in which the play clock will be set to 25 seconds

| <u>Situation</u>                   | <u>Play Clock</u> | <u>Referee Signal</u> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| For a free kick                    | 25 seconds        | Chop                  |
| After any kick (free or scrimmage) | 25 seconds        | Chop                  |
| After a touchback                  | 25 seconds        | Chop                  |
| After a score of any kind          | 25 seconds        | Chop                  |
| Start of a quarter                 | 25 seconds        | Chop                  |
| After a change of possession       | 25 seconds        | Chop                  |
| Untimed down                       | 25 seconds        | Chop                  |
| Start of a series in overtime      | 25 seconds        | Chop                  |
| Inadvertent whistle                | 25 seconds        | Wind                  |
| Administration of a penalty        | 25 seconds        | Chop or Wind          |
| After a measurement                | 25 seconds        | Chop or Wind          |
| An officials' timeout              | 25 seconds        | Chop or Wind          |
| Following an injury                | 25 seconds        | Chop or Wind          |
| A helmet comes off                 | 25 seconds        | Chop or Wind          |

### Notes:

- This change affects only the play clock and not the game clock
- The Back Judge has primary responsibility for the play clock and will still give the same 10 second warning and 5 second count down when there is no visible play clock.
- Following the end of the down, the Back Judge will start the 40 second play clock by raising their hand over their head and then dropping their hand and starting the play clock. If the Back Judge is the covering official on the play, they will give whatever signal is appropriate (incomplete pass, stop the clock, etc.) and then raise their hand over their head, drop their hand and start the clock.
- ALL officials on the crew will echo and give the dead ball signal AFTER the covering official on the crew has blown their whistle and declared the play dead. If necessary, the covering official on the play will give whatever signal is appropriate (incomplete pass, stop the clock, etc.) and then raise their hand over their head.
- ALL members of the crew will hustle to promptly and efficiently engage in ball relays to spot the ball as timely and accurately as possible. Crews must be consistent in starting the 40 second clock, spotting the ball and hustling into position for the snap. The offense should not be waiting on the officiating crew to spot the ball.
- A thorough pre-game will be essential to the successful application of the 40 second clock. The procedures should be discussed with the head coaches at the start of the game. Crews must clearly review the duties and responsibilities of the game clock operator, play clock operator, chain crew members, ball personnel, etc. prior to the start of the game.

## Notes Continued:

- If the 40 second clock runs down to 25 seconds or below and the ball has not been spotted yet through no fault of the players, the Referee will reset the play clock to 25 seconds.
  - There are several problems with the strict adherence to this that were discussed:
    - 1) With a non-visible play clock, how are you going to know when 25 seconds has been reached? Many Back Judges use belt timers that vibrate with 10 seconds remaining on the countdown but otherwise give no other warning.
    - 2) If the team is still in the huddle or substituting when the play clock reaches 25 seconds and the ball is not yet spotted, who cares? They are not ready to snap the ball anyway.
    - 3) It's going to be very disruptive to the game to keep stopping it to reset the play clock for crews who don't hustle as well, have bad ball personnel, etc. In the long run, it will defeat the whole purpose of having a 40 second clock.

Therefore, to be practical and clearly implementable, the follow should be adhered to:

If the 40 second clock runs down to 10 seconds or below (as indicated by the Back Judge's signal or visible play clock) and the ball has not been spotted yet through no fault of the players, the Referee will sound the whistle to stop the game clock and play clock, signal to reset the play clock to 25 seconds (with a one palm over the head pumping motion) and then with a whistle start the play clock (and if appropriate the game clock as well).

The bottom line of all this is, we are NOT going to assess a delay of game penalty on the offense because the officiating crew can't spot the ball in a timely fashion. If at any time the Referee feels the offense is put in a position that they cannot realistically get the snap off before the play clock will expire, the Referee at their discretion can reset the play clock to 25 seconds.

- The "box" man on the chain crew must hustle (RUN) to the next spot on first downs. Typically, only the game clock will be stopped on a 1<sup>st</sup> down and the 40 second clock will have been started and running after the previous play that resulted in the 1<sup>st</sup> down ended. Once the Umpire spots the ball, technically the ball is ready for play.

So long as the "box" man is hustling and getting to the new spot of a new 1<sup>st</sup> down quickly, the Umpire can stand over the ball briefly to prevent the snap and back out once the "box" is set. However, the "box" man should NOT be allowed to consistently disrupt the tempo of the game and prevent the offense from developing a rhythm. If the offense is ready to go and the "box" is nowhere near being close to set in place, the Head Linesman should drop a bean bag on the new line of scrimmage at the sideline and the play be allowed to proceed on since the spotted ball is technically ready for play. The chains should then set up on the spot of the bean bag. A Head Linesman will need to have more than one bean bag with them on the field (keep one on your belt and another in your pant's pocket)

If the chain crew is so horrible you choose to fire them, please remember the team who is responsible for giving you that chain crew is the HOME team. Therefore, if you are going to fire your chain crew and have them replaced, do it when the HOME team has possession of the ball and disrupt their drive.

- Well-trained ball personnel will be required to keep the game running smoothly and to have ball relays available promptly. Each team should provide at least TWO game balls. Ball personnel should be easily identifiable on the sideline with vests, shirts, etc. that contrast with the team uniforms on their sideline. They need to stay in close proximity to the Line Judge and pay attention to the game.
- The implementation of the 40 second clock adds NO additional responsibilities regarding substitutions to the duties of the crew. In high school, the snap is NOT held when the offense substitutes like you see in NCAA and NFL games.

# The Change To A 40 Second Clock Affects EVERY Crew Member

## **R** Referee

- Know when the play clock is 40 seconds vs. 25 seconds
- Know when to and when not to blow your whistle
- Adapt to advanced ball spotting mechanics

## **U** Umpire

- Spot the ball promptly
- Hold the snap until the box is in place on 1<sup>st</sup> downs (if the box hustles)

## **HL** Head Linesman

- Control your chain crew
- Get the box man to hustle
- Drop a bean bag and go if the chain crew is terrible on 1<sup>st</sup> downs (thus, you need 2 bean bags, keep one on your belt and the other in your pocket to drop when you need to)

## **LJ** Line Judge

- Have control over the ball boys
- Relay balls quickly and crisply

## **BJ** Back Judge

- Know when the play clock is to be 40 seconds vs. 25 seconds
- Start the play clock consistently

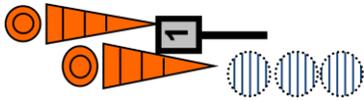
## **ECO** Electronic Clock Operator

- Pay attention, there very well may no longer be a whistle to tell you to start the clock, merely a silent wind signal

## **40/25** 40 Second / 25 Second Play Clock Operator

- Pay attention, watch the REFEREE AND the BACK JUDGE
- You need to know when to set the clock to 40 seconds and when to set the clock to 25 seconds
- \*\* Lousy clock operators can make a good on field crew look like they are totally incompetent

## The Change To A 40 Second Clock Affects EVERY Crew Member



### Chain Crew

- The box person needs to MOVE (RUN) quickly
- The game is not necessarily going to wait on the chain crew. If you move quickly, the restart of the game clock on a 1<sup>st</sup> down will pause until the box is set. Otherwise, the Head Lineman is going to drop a bean bag on the new LOS for the 1<sup>st</sup> down and the game is going to continue without you if the offense is ready to go. The chain crew will then set up on the bean bag spot.