



## MEMORANDUM



**TO:** Athletic Directors, Football Coaches, Football Assignment Secretaries,  
Football Officials

**FROM:** Lee Sanders, Assistant Executive Director

**RE:** Preliminary Guidance for Implementing 40-Second Play Clock

The 2019 football season will see the addition of a 40-second play clock to the game. It will supplement the traditional 25-second play clock, which will still be used in certain situations.

The purpose of the 40-second play clock is to ensure that each team is given a consistent interval between plays in all games. Generally, unless the game is stopped for some administrative stoppage that affects normal game flow (e.g., change of possession, penalty, injury, clock error, etc.), the offensive team has 40 seconds to snap the ball after the previous down ends. After the 40-second play clock begins, the ball becomes ready for play and may be snapped when an official spots the ball at the appropriate spot and steps away to his position. When there is an administrative stoppage, the traditional 25-second play clock will be used, and the ball may be snapped once the Referee marks the ball ready for play.

To assist with understanding the new rules in preparation for spring games, this preliminary guidance is being provided to officials and coaches. A chart, case plays, and frequently asked questions about the rule are attached. Also, a video showing the 40-second play clock is available at [40 Second Play Clock Video](#). Further guidance will be given prior to the season in conjunction with the rules clinics.

For the most part, officiating mechanics will not change much for on-field officials. Just as before, officials should officiate the live-ball play and dead-ball action following the play. The covering official should signal that the ball is dead by blowing a whistle and giving either a dead-ball or other appropriate signal. The Umpire will be the primary official to spot the ball. The officiating crew should hustle and be efficient in its effort to spot the ball consistently and timely, but it should never rush or overly hurry. A goal should be to have the ball spotted with no later than with 30 to 32 seconds remaining on the play clock. When a runner is tackled in bounds, that game ball should be used unless there is a need to bring in a new game ball.

School administrators should now begin taking necessary steps to ensure that the visible play clocks at home stadiums allow for the new rule.

Officiating associations should begin teaching these procedures. To the extent possible, teams and officials are encouraged to practice using the 40-second play clock in upcoming spring games. If there are any concerns or questions, please let your Assignment Secretaries and LHSOA Football Committee representatives know.

Remember that some of these items may change following final publication and editorial comments by Federation. Any resulting changes and new procedures will be sent to everyone before the football season begins.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

## **ATTACHMENT A – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

1. **When is the 40-second clock used?** Generally, the 40-second play clock is used following a down other than a scoring play, kickoff, or kicking play that is followed by a new set of down. Whether the game clock is stopped or running has no bearing on the 40-second play clock.
2. **When is the 25-second clock used?** The 25-second play clock is used following any “administrative stoppage,” which is something that interrupts the normal flow of the game. These include:
  - a. Score.
  - b. Penalty administration.
  - c. Injury.
  - d. Helmet coming off of a player.
  - e. Measurement.
  - f. Before and after a Free Kick.
  - g. Change of team possession when the defense (Team B) will next put the ball in play.
  - h. First down awarded to either team following a punt or field goal attempt.
  - i. Start of each period, including each overtime period.
  - j. Charged team timeout.
  - k. Official’s timeout, except when awarding the offense (Team A) a new set of downs after a non-kicking down ends.
3. **When does the 40-second play clock begin?** The 40-second play clock begins when the ball becomes dead and the covering official gives any of the following signals:
  - a. Dead ball overhead (Sig. 7)
  - b. Stop-clock when runner is out of bounds or makes line to gain (Sig. 3)
  - c. Incomplete pass (Sig. 10)
  - d. Wind-clock when runner is down near sideline (Sig. 2)
4. **When does the 25-second play clock begin?** The 25-second play clock begins as it always has—when the Referee “marks” the ball ready for play by blowing his whistle and giving the ready-for-play “chop” signal (Sig. 1).
5. **When the 40-second play clock is in use, when is the ball ready for play?** When the 40-second play clock is running, the ball becomes ready for play, and Team A may snap it, when an official places the ball at the appropriate spot in between the hash marks and steps toward his position.
6. **When is the new line-to-gain established when the 40-second clock is running?** When a team makes or is awarded a first down, the new line-to-gain is established when the ball is ready for play, meaning when the official places the ball at the appropriate spot and steps toward his position.

7. **Is an official's time-out to award the offense (Team A) a first down an administrative stoppage requiring a 25-second play clock?** No. When the offense (Team A) makes a first down, the Referee will award a first down and prepare for the next scrimmage play without any delay. The 40-second clock will start running at the end of the play. This action does not interrupt the flow of play or otherwise delay the next play from occurring. However, measurements and penalty administrations are administrative stoppages interrupting the normal flow of the game, and, if a first down is awarded after those events, the 25-second play clock will be used.
8. **After a change of team possession during the down, which play clock is used?** It depends on the result of the play. Though the game clock will stop after a down involving a change of possession, the type of play clock depends on which team next puts the ball in play. If the defense (Team B) or receivers (Team R) will next put the ball in play, this is an administrative stoppage that requires the units to change, and the 25-second play clock is used. If the original offense (Team A) retains the ball, no units need to change, and the 40-second play clock is used. However, if either team gets a new series after a kicking down (kickoff, field goal, punt), the 25-second play clock is used.
9. **What happens when a foul or injury occurs when the ball is dead while the 40-second play clock is running?** These are administrative stoppages. After completing the penalty or replacing the injured player, the play clock is set to 25 seconds, and it will start when the Referee marks it ready for play.
10. **If the offense makes quick substitutions after a play, will officials hold up the snap to allow the defense to make defensive matchups?** No. The new rule does not allow officials to hold up the snap or provide a matchup opportunity for the defense. However, just as before, all 11 players must be within the 9-yard marks ("numbers") after the ball is ready for play, and the entire offensive unit must be set for one second before snapping the ball.
11. **Will the snap be held up to wait for the chains to be set?** No. The ball is ready for play when it is spotted. The Head Linesman should be ready to drop a bean bag on the ground if the down box is not in position.
12. **What if there is significant delay in spotting the ball for the next play?** If there are less than 20 seconds remaining on the 40-second play clock when the ball is spotted, and time is not critical, the Referee will reset the play clock to 25 seconds by giving a "pump up" signal with one hand. When time becomes critical, such as within the last four minutes of either half, and there are less than 20 seconds remaining when the ball is spotted, the Referee should stop the game, have the play clock set to 25 seconds, and give the traditional ready-for-play signal. This becomes an administrative stoppage.

## ATTACHMENT B - CASE PLAY EXAMPLES

1. A – 2nd & 5 @ A-30. QB A9 hands the ball to RB36, who runs to the A-45 where he is (a) tackled in bounds; (b) forced out of bounds. **ANSWER:** (a) and (b). A – 1st & 10 @ A-45. Play clock: 40 seconds. In both cases, the play clock is set to 40-seconds and begins when the ball is dead and the covering official signals. A first down is awarded in both situations.
2. A – 1st & 10 @ A-30. QB A9 throws a pass intended for A88, but the pass is incomplete. **ANSWER:** A 2nd & 10 @ A-30. Play clock: 40 seconds. The play clock is set to 40 seconds and begins when the ball is dead and the covering official signals incomplete.
3. A – 3rd & 10 @ A-30. During a sweep to the right, A76 holds B99 at the A-30, as RB runs to the A-35 the ball becomes dead. Team B (a) accepts; (b) declines the penalty. **ANSWER:** A – 3rd & 20 @ A-20 OR A 4th & 10 @ A-30. Play clock: 25. Following the administration of the penalty, the play clock is set to 25 seconds and starts on the Referee’s ready for play signal. It does not matter whether the penalty is accepted or declined. The administration of penalty procedures is an administrative stoppage that is followed by a 25-second play clock.
4. A – 1st & 10 @ 50. RB A35 runs to the B-47 where he is hit and fumbles. A pile forms in an attempt to get the ball. Officials give a “stop-clock” signal and begin digging in the pile to see who has it. The Line Judge reaches in and rules that (a) A60 has the ball; (b) B20 is in possession of the ball at the B-45. **ANSWER:** In both situations, the clock operator should have started a 40-second clock when the covering official gave the stop-clock signal without signaling which team had the ball. In (a), the 40-second clock should continue running because Team A has the ball and there was no administrative stoppage. In (b), Team B is awarded a first down, and the play clock should be set to 25 seconds. It will start on the Referee’s ready for play.
5. A – 1st & 10 @ 50. RB A35 runs to the B-47 where he is hit and fumbles. A pile forms in an attempt to get the ball. Officials give a “stop-clock” signal and begin digging in the pile to see who has it. The play clock operator properly begins the 40-second clock. The Line Judge reaches in and rules that A60 has the ball at the B-45. Officials then signal to wind the game clock. When the Umpire spots the ball, the play clock shows 15 seconds. **ANSWER:** Because of the significant delay in spotting the ball, the Referee should stop the game clock, reset the play clock to 25 seconds, and start both clocks on the ready.

**ATTACHMENT C – SUMMARY CHART**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Play Clock Starts At</b>	<b>Game Clock Starts On</b>	<b>Covering Official's Signal(s) To End Play</b>	<b>Referee's Signal</b>
Dead Ball Inbounds	40	Running	7	None
Dead Ball Out of Bounds	40	Snap	3	None
Incomplete Pass	40	Snap	10	None
Offense (Team A) Awarded First Down	40	Referee's Signal*	3	Silent Wind*
Penalty Administration	25	Ready*	3	Whistled Wind*
Charged Team Timeout	25	Snap	3	Chop
Injury / Helmet Off	25	Ready*	3	Whistled Wind*
Measurement	25	Ready*	3	Whistled Wind*
Double Change of Possession – Offense (Team A) Snaps	40	Referee's Signal*	7	Silent Wind*
Change of Possession – Defense (Team B Snaps)	25	Snap	3	Chop
Touchdown, Try, Field Goal, Safety	25	Varies**	Varies	Chop
Start of Each Period / Each Overtime Period	25	Snap	N/A	Chop
Before and After a Free Kick / Kickoff	25	Snap	Varies	Chop
After a Punt / FG Attempt Followed By a First Down for Either Team	25	Snap	3	Chop
Other Official's Timeout / Administrative Stoppage***	25	Ready*	3	Whistled Wind*

\* If event does not occur in conjunction with any other event that stops the clock.

\*\* The game clock starts on a free kick according to rule.

\*\*\* Includes inadvertent whistle or period extension.