



International Federation of American Football
Officiating Committee

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This is the first IFAF officiating bulletin. The intent is to distribute updated information on mechanics, procedures, rule interpretations, philosophies and the like. The information in these bulletins apply to all IFAF games (unless otherwise noted) and will be implemented by all officials working an IFAF game. The bulletins may not necessarily apply to other games or officials. While continental and national federations and other leagues/associations certainly may use the contents of these bulletins, officials should check with their own federation or officiating organizations before implementing the contents in non-IFAF games.

Please contact the IFAF Officiating Committee if you have any questions.

On behalf of the IFAF OC

Einar Bolstad
dommer1@hotmail.com

A. 40/25-Second Clock Mechanics Without Visible Stadium Play Clocks

As we will use the 40/25-second play clock in all IFAF games, including those played at venues lacking visual play clocks, the following mechanic will be used when there are no visual clocks or in case of a malfunction of visible clocks.

1. The Back Judge is responsible for the 40/25-second clock (Side Judge is responsible for the game clock) throughout the game. If there are no working play clocks, the BJ will also get the added duty of doing the actual timing of the 40/25.
2. If known before the start of the game that the play clock will be kept on the field, it is imperative that the officials make the teams fully aware of the signal to be used and what it means. If the play clocks malfunction during the game, a Referee's discretionary time-out is to be taken, the wing officials will inform the coaches of the procedure and the Referee will make an announcement along these lines: "The stadium play clocks are inoperative. The play clock will be kept on the field and the Back Judge will raise an arm when 10 seconds remain." If the clocks become operative and will be used again, an announcement to that fact must be made and the wing officials will inform the coaches.
3. The BJ will start the 40/25 count as per the rules. When 10 seconds remain in the 40/25 count, the BJ will raise one arm straight up into the air and keep it there until the ball is put in play or the play clock expires.
4. It is permissible for the Referee to alert the offense if he sees the signal before the offense is at the line. However, as such an alert will naturally come with less than 10 seconds remaining, the R must not say "10 seconds" as this will lead the offense to believe that they have more time left than what they actually have. The use of a more generic warning is appropriate, such as "hurry up" or similar. Such a warning is not to be given if the stadium play clocks are in use.
5. In case the play clock expires before the ball is legally put in play, the BJ will:

1. Blow the whistle loudly in several short sharp bursts ("funny whistle").
2. Throw the flag high into the air.
3. Signal the clock to be stopped [S3] two-three times.
4. Give the Delay of Game signal [S21] to, and make eye contact with, the Referee.
5. While doing this run 5-6 steps or so towards the R. However, on a regular DOG there is no need to come all the way in as this will unnecessarily delay the game further.
5. The rules state that the ball must be made ready with 20 seconds or more on the play clock when the 40-second interval is used. The BJ must monitor this. If the ball is not yet made ready when the play clock hits 20 seconds, the BJ must:
 1. Stop the game (and the game clock) and quickly communicate this to the R.
 2. The R will then signal to reset the clock to 25 seconds with the appropriate signal. The play clock will start on the RFP. If the game clock was running, then the R will also wind the game clock on the RFP.
 3. If handled well, no announcement is necessary.
6. It is important to discuss these situations in the pre-game. It is important that this part of the game is administered as smoothly as possible.
7. Timing the 40/25 second clock on the field can be a challenging task for the BJ. The BJ must make sure that he has an appropriate watch, knows how to handle it and that he has a "gameplan" for how he will perform these duties. These preparations must start well before gameday.

B. Substitution Mechanics

Rule 3-5-2-e states:

While in the process of substitution or simulated substitution, Team A is prohibited from rushing quickly to the line of scrimmage with the obvious attempt of creating a defensive disadvantage. If the ball is ready for play, the game officials will not permit the ball to be snapped until Team B has placed substitutes in position and replaced players have left the field of play. Team B must react promptly with its substitutes.

PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. Delay of game on Team B for not completing its substitutions promptly, or delay of game on Team A for causing the play clock to expire. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S21]. The referee will then notify the head coach that any further use of this tactic will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct foul.

PENALTY—Dead-ball foul. An official will sound his whistle immediately. 15 yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S27].

The following mechanics will be used to handle these situations:

1. The rules or the mechanics does not apply if there is no substitution by Team A. Team A may snap the ball at any time the ball is ready for play if they have not substituted.
2. When Team A substitutes, and there is a possibility of rule 3-5-2-e applying, the official seeing the substitution will give the "substitution disadvantage" signal to the R. The signal is extending both arms straight out to the sides from the body with the arms horizontal, palms facing forward and fists closed.
3. Upon seeing this signal, any official (primarily HL/LJ) may repeat the signal to ensure that the R sees it.
4. When the R sees this signal, he will make a determination on if the offense has substituted in such a way as to put the defense at a disadvantage. The R has sole jurisdiction in making this determination.
5. If the R believes that this is a rule 3-5-2-e situation, the R will also give the "substitution disadvantage" signal to the U. This signals the U to immediately assume a position over the ball to prevent the offense from snapping the ball. The U must be ready for this signal so

- that he reacts immediately when the signal is given.
6. The R will then look to the defense to see how they react. The defense will be given approximately 3 seconds to start to match up. The defense can match up in three ways:
 1. By not substituting but by moving players already on the field to match up.
 2. By sending in the appropriate substitute(s) who go immediately to their match up position(s).
 3. By sending any players in excess of 11 off the field while matching up with the remaining 11 players.
 7. When the R wants the U to leave the ball and get back into his position and let the ball be snapped, the R will point to the U. The U must then quickly move to his normal position and the ball may then be snapped.
 8. On any down where possible quick substitutions by the offense are anticipated, the U should already be over the ball. This applies especially to a play following a COP or prior to 4th down. If the offense substitutes normally, the R will point the U off the ball.
 9. If, in the opinion of the R, the defense does not, for whatever reason, complete their substitutions promptly and in a timely manner, the defense may be called for DOG prior to the play clock expiring.
 10. If, in the opinion of the R, the defense has responded promptly and is completing their substitutions in a timely manner, and the 40/25-second clock expires, the offense is guilty of DOG.

C. Two-Minute Warning

The two-minute warning is only given in games where there is no visual stadium game clock, or where the visual stadium game clock has become inoperative. If there is a working visual stadium game clock, there is no two-minute warning. When the play clock rules were changed from the 25-second clock to the 40/25-second clock, rule 3-3-8-b-1 was not updated to fit the new rules. This rule states that if a two-minute warning is to be given, it may not interrupt the play-clock count. With the 40-second clock now starting when the ball becomes dead, it will often be impossible to declare the two-minute warning with approximately two minutes left. Therefore, the following procedure will be used and will "override" 3-3-8-b-1:

1. If the ball is dead when two minutes remain in a half (2nd or 4th period) with no working visual stadium clock, the official responsible for game timing (normally the SJ) will stop the clock, blow his whistle loudly and inform the R that two minutes remain. Be prepared to give the "funny whistle" (repeated short sharp blasts) as some players may not otherwise understand that the ball is not to be snapped.
2. If the ball is in play when two minutes remain in a half, the play must be allowed to continue. Once the ball becomes dead, the above procedure applies.
3. The R will make an announcement on the microphone. Suggested script: "This is the two-minute warning. There are two minutes left in the half." If the ball was in play when the clock reached two minutes, the exact time must be announced: "This is the two-minute warning. There is one minute, 56 seconds left in the half." If there is no working microphone, the R will approach both sidelines, get the attention of the head coach and clearly inform him of how much time remains.
4. The officials on the sidelines closest to the head coach should take the opportunity to inform the head coach of the number of time-outs remaining for both teams.
5. When the above procedure has been completed, the play clock shall be set to 25 seconds and the ball declared ready for play by the R (whistle and signal). The game clock will start on the snap.
6. The game will not be delayed further due to the two-minute warning. If teams choose to go to the sideline, they do so at their own peril – this is not a team time-out and play will be

stopped only for as long as it takes to inform them of the time remaining. Officials should use preventative officiating here.

7. Also note rule 3-3-8-c. In addition to the officials informing the coaches and players, the R may use his microphone to inform the spectators.

D. Starting The Game Clock With The 40-Second Clock Running

1. We will not use a whistle for the sole purpose of drawing attention to the fact that the game clock will restart when the 40-second clock is already running. After a play where the game clock stops, the 40-second clock starts, and the game clock is to be restarted when the ball is ready for play – the game clock will be restarted by the R giving S2 only without a whistle.
2. The SJ may repeat the signal if he wishes. Other officials may also do so if the game clock operator does not start the clock when signalled by the R.

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