The Official Mechanics Manual of the Colorado Football Officials Association

(2019) Amendments

August 2, 2019

(2020) Amendments

July 9, 2020

The Manual was reprinted as the 3rd edition in February 2018. For 2019 and 2020, the amendments are noted below.

Use this document as an insert to the book you received in 2018. New books will not be distributed to those who received a book in 2018.
Chapter 8 Game Timing for 40-Second Play Clock

***NOTE-The new chapter 8 is formally Appendix E***

(2020) Clock Adjustments page 228

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event *</th>
<th>Play Clock Starts at</th>
<th>Game Clock Starts on</th>
<th>Covering Official’s Signal #</th>
<th>Referee’s Signal</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dead ball inbounds</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Running</td>
<td>S7</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead ball out of bounds</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>S3</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete pass</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Snap</td>
<td>S10</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team A awarded 1st down</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Signal</td>
<td>S3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Penalty administration</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ready</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Wind</td>
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<td>Charged team timeout</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Snap</td>
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<td>Chop</td>
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<td>Helmet off/Equipment Issue/Injury – Team A</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ready</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Wind</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helmet off/Equipment Issue/Injury – Team B</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Ready</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ready</td>
<td>S3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Double Change of possession- Team A snaps</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Ready</td>
<td>S7</td>
<td>Wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of possession- Team B snaps</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Snap</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Chop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>N/A</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try, FG, Safety</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Varies**</td>
<td>Varies**</td>
<td>Chop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of each period</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Snap</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Chop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal kick when new series is awarded</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Snap</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Chop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of an overtime period</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Chop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other administrative stoppage ***</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ready</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Wind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

** The game clock will start by rule on the free kick.

*** Includes inadvertent whistle and period extension.

# S3 is stop the clock, S7 is “dead ball - start play clock,” S10 is incomplete pass.
After an official’s timeout, the following occurrences by the defense result in a ready-for-play with a 40-second play clock. The referee should precede the ready-for-play signal with Crew Signal “L” (two hands). The following acronym may be helpful: HEID 40:

H  Helmet off  
E  Equipment repair  
I  Injury  
D  by the Defense

(2020) Resetting the Play Clock page 229

If the play clock is interrupted, it will always be reset to 25 seconds (Crew Signal “L” – one hand). If there is an appreciable delay in spotting the ball and the play clock is down to 20 seconds, the play clock should be reset to 25 seconds. When there is no visible play clock the referee should approximate this interval and use his best judgment. When in doubt, reset the play clock. The referee will do this by stopping the game clock and signaling (Crew Signal “L” - one hand) to reset the play clock to 25 seconds. The game clock will start by rule either on the ready-for-play signal or the snap.
Players who are not involved in the toss must be kept completely off the field (at a designated senior night during the regular season, the home team’s seniors may stand at the nine-yard marks during the toss). Non player honorary personnel can be escorted to midfield. The captains are asked to introduce themselves to each other. It is recommended the Referee shake hands only with the speaking captains.

Officials must look sharp on scoring kicks. The two officials who are under the goal posts should rehearse their routine. Both officials should say “yes-yes” or “no-no.” That serves as a cue for both officials to take two steps forward, straight out from directly under the goal post counting “one, two,” and then signaling. If the kick is successful, both officials should hold their signal for the same amount of time and drop their hands simultaneously. The Back Judge is responsible to ensure the Referee properly signals the outcome of the play. If the kick is not successful, there should be only one “kick failed” signal will be given by each official under the goal posts. The two officials should try to end their signal simultaneously. Regardless of the result, the Referee does not echo the signal.
Officials should signal as they would after a scrimmage play. The primary signals utilized are touchdown and incomplete pass. If a try is unsuccessful, the wings should mark the forward progress spot and yell “no, no, no” to the Referee without giving any signal. The Referee is the only official who signals the try is unsuccessful. The Referee does not echo the touchdown signal on a successful try.

S7—Dead ball and the runner is down. For dead ball fouls only. It and is not used to indicate the runner is down inbounds. See Appendix E for use of this signal as part of the series of signals that the play is over and to start the 40-second play clock.
False start
Illegal Formation
Defensive disconcerting signals

S19—False start/illegal formation. Arms out from chest. Two rotations are sufficient. Also used for free kicks out of bounds. For false starts, defensive disconcerting signals and illegal snaps, the dead-ball signal (S7) must precede this signal.
Equipment violation

S23—Equipment. The loss-of-down signal with only the right arm.

Effective 2020, signal S23 will no longer be used. Equipment violations are no longer a penalty. A player with an equipment violation is simply to leave the game.
**CREW SIGNAL J – OPTIONAL STARTING 2019**
Receiver on the line
Used by wings to signal to one another to indicate widest receiver is on the line. Use the arm on the side of the defensive formation.

**CREW SIGNAL I – REMAINS IN AFFECT FOR 2019 & BEYOND**
Receiver off the line/Runner inbounds
Used by wings to signal to one another to indicate widest receiver is off the line. Also used by a wing official (quick punch) to signal the Back Judge that the runner remained inbounds during a touchdown run.
(2019) Crew Signal C page 76

CREW SIGNAL C – REMAINS IN AFFECT FOR 2019 & BEYOND
Play ended inbounds, start clock.

(2019) Crew Signal D page 76

CREW SIGNAL D – REPLACE TO CROSSED WRISTS AT BELT 2019
Play ended out of bounds, don’t start clock
Make sure the Referee can see the signal.
Used to change time on the play game clock.

**Reset play clock**
A pumping motion with one hand up and down near the head, “push the sky.”

One hand – 25 sec
Two hands – 40 sec ***HEID 40*** (See Appendix E)
Charged Timeout

(The following is added after the last paragraph of the Charged Timeout section)

The rules allow only one coach to call timeouts and that almost always will be the head coach. The wing official should discuss timeout request procedures with head coach before the game. Some timeout requests are urgent because they are needed either to conserve time, to stop the wrong play from being run or to make a defensive adjustment/substitution. In those situations, it may be difficult to determine which coach is requesting the timeout. Nonetheless, such a request should be granted immediately. The wing official should not turn his back to the field to verify it was the head coach who spoke. The interests of the game are best served by granting timeouts immediately and asking questions later.
Chapter 21 Between Downs

(2019) Umpire page 99

(In the Umpire section, replace the 5th paragraph with a new paragraph)

The umpire must be cognizant of the play clock at all times. If a 40-second play clock is running, he simply spots the ball and moves promptly to his pre-snap position unless the play resulted in a first down inbounds for Team A. In that case, he must wait for the referee to start the clock (“silent wind”). If there is an administrative stoppage, the umpire should stand over the ball until the ready-for-play signal, especially if the snapper is in position to place a hand on the ball; he then moves to a pre-snap position. If preparation for the next down is such that the offense is nowhere near the ball for the next snap before the ready-for-play, the Umpire can move off the ball to his pre-snap position. In either case, when the umpire is standing over the ball and Team A is ready to snap it, the umpire may ask the snapper “Please wait until I am in position.”

The umpire must remain in control of the ball at all times. If the Referee is not in position, he stands over the ball until the ready-for-play signal, especially if the snapper is in position to place a hand on the ball; he then moves to a pre-snap position. If preparation for the next down is such that the offense is nowhere near the ball for the next snap before the ready-for-play, the Umpire can move off the ball to his pre-snap position.
(making sure the Referee is aware of the movement). In that case, the Umpire must ensure the snapper does not place a hand on the ball until the ready-for-play is given.

(2020) Linesman and Line Judge pages 99-100

Next comes the check for no more than four in the backfield seven on the line. He can ascertain there are exactly 11 players on the offense from the signal given by the Referee and Umpire when the offensive huddle breaks (crew signal “A”).

(2020) Back Judge page 100

When a player, either offensive or defensive, is departing the field and the snap is imminent, the Back Judge is responsible for determining if the player was on the field at the snap. Such a player is off the field if his next step would be out of bounds.

Unless there is a visible play clock, the Back Judge keeps the play clock and uses a visible count to count off the last 10 seconds (crew signal “P”). The Back Judge also times the 60-second interval between a successful field goal or try and the ensuing kickoff.
Anyone subject to the rules may be disqualified or removed from the field area. The only exceptions are trainers, the Athletic Directors of each school, school principals and school district superintendents. Objectionable behavior by any of the preceding personnel should be noted in the game report. Problems with other personnel such as announcers, grounds keepers, etc. should be addressed with game management without delaying the game.

When a player is disqualified from a game, he may not participate in the remainder of that game. At the discretion of the head coach, the player may remain in the team bench area, but must remain under adult supervision until the game is concluded. Officials are not authorized to mandate a player’s removal from the team area.

When a coach (or any other adult support person) is disqualified from a game, he must leave the stadium area and is prohibited from any further contact with his team, direct or indirect, for the remainder of the game. Such disqualified personnel may not go to the press box or go sit in the stands. For non-compliance, the referee may forfeit the game.
Chapter 24 Game Management

(Add the following to the end of chapter 24 as a new section)

(2020) Lightning page 106

The monitoring of lightning is the responsibility of game management. Officials shall abide by the policy of the host school district. It is important for crew chiefs to have a pregame conversation with the site director to know the protocol for handling a lightning disturbance. The site director should be the one coordinating that process. The site director will have contact with the crew chief, the coaches, the PA announcer, etc. to alert them of impending action. In accordance with Rule 3-1-5, the referee is authorized to delay the game before it starts or suspend a game in progress when weather conditions are construed to be hazardous to life or limb of the participants. If the site director requests such a delay/suspension, the referee should comply with the request. The officiating crew will remain on site and be prepared to continue the game unless all three parties (the referee and both head coaches) agree that the game cannot be continued that day and should be terminated. If the game is terminated due to hazardous conditions, officials should record all relevant information (score, possession, timeouts, ball location, chains, down, etc), and relay that information in the game report. Resumption of a terminated game is outside the
purview of the officials and would be handled by the schools, their league, and CHSAA.

The referee shall not *terminate* the game without the concurrence of both coaches; however, if a game being played under the mercy rule is halted by lightning, the game is immediately terminated even without consensus of the coaches. If a game is terminated, the team that is ahead as the winner with the existing score (Rule 3-1-4). If the game is continued, any period may be shortened by agreement of the three parties (Rule 3-1-3). This could include using a running clock or reducing the length of the period. Prior to continuation of the game, the teams shall be afforded sufficient time to warm up as determined by the coaches. The game shall then resume from the point of interruption.

If an administrator is present (Athletic Director, Principal, School Board member, etc.) and expresses disagreement with his head coach regarding game termination, it is the coach’s responsibility to resolve the conflict. The referee shall only consider the decision of the head coaches.

When activity is stopped, the following individuals shall be responsible for the safety of personnel:
- The head coach for players and other team personnel.
- Game management for spectators and support personnel.
- The Referee for the officiating crew.

If appropriate, the lightning delay can serve as the halftime
intermission. For example, if the game is suspended with two minutes remaining in the second quarter, when play is resumed the second quarter will be completed, followed by a short intermission taken before the second half kickoff. Both coaches must agree to any such modification; if they do not agree, the quarter will be finished when play is resumed, followed by the standard 15-minute halftime intermission.

(Add the following to the end of chapter 24 as a new section)

**Cold Weather** page 106

Dealing with cold weather is not as finite as lightning. A one-size fits all approach does not work equally across the state. As an example, 10 degrees after dark on a wet field is different than 10 degrees at altitude on a sunny day with no wind. In all cases, common sense must be used.

Some school districts may have a cold weather policy. If conditions are such that cold weather may be a factor, the referee should ascertain local guidelines before the game so that game administrator(s), officials, and both sidelines are aware of potential disruptions.

An extended half time may be warranted to afford athletes time to warm up/dry off and or change to dry clothing under their uniform. The coaches must mutually agree to terminate the game.
Chapter 26 CFOA Philosophies of Officiating

(Add the following to the end of the false starts section)

By rule, officials are expected to make this judgment regardless of whether Team B encroaches; however, there will always be marginal cases where preventive officiating should take precedence and the effect of the questionable act should be a consideration. That means if the shift is questionable and no encroachment results, the offense can be advised if a similar shift is repeated, it would likely be judged to be a false start.

Likewise, the defense is prohibited from inducing a false start or attempting to induce one. Team B players are prohibited from making quick non-football related movements in an obvious attempt to draw an offensive player into committing a foul.

The defense is allowed to shift to either side or from lineman to linebacker or vice versa. Also, linebackers and defensive backs who run toward the neutral zone attempting to time their blitz with the snap are not in violation. While it is legal to fake a blitz, repeated fakes, especially in rapid succession, are likely an effort to cause Team A to false start. Examples of violations include: stomping a foot, clapping hands, quickly and repeatedly standing up or moving to a three- or
four-point stance or vice versa, quickly bobbing their head and/or abruptly flexing legs or arms.

(Add the following new paragraph to the beginning of the shifts section)

(2020) Multiple Shifts page 111

In most cases, offensive players can shift as long as they do not commit a false start in doing so. Interior linemen (including covered tight ends), cannot shift once they put a hand on or near the ground. The practical application of “near the ground” is below the knees.

Simultaneous shifts by players on the line can create a judgment dilemma for...

(Add the following as a new section after the shifts section)

(2020) Defensive Signals page 111

Defensive lineman as well as any other of their teammates cannot use words or signals that disconcert the opponents when they are preparing to put the ball in play. Many players do not understand that and preventive officiating should be exercised, if possible. Restrictions on the defense begin when offensive players take their set positions. Special attention should be given to possible interference during the quarterback’s cadence, and particularly during an audible. The
defense is not required to be silent during this interval. The
defensive captain has a right to call signals while offense is
calling theirs as long as the signals do not resemble those of the
opponents. There are legitimate defensive signals which may
need to be given immediately prior to snap. Examples include:
putting a blitz on or off, changing pass coverage, or telling
defensive linemen to shift or stunt.

Officials must determine if the defense is making a legitimate
call, or merely making a ruse in attempt to interfere. The
defense must avoid anything which simulates the sounds or
cadence of offensive starting signals. The offense has "first
choice" of signals and the defense is required to use, or change
to, something completely different. Specific words which the
defense should not be allowed to use include: “go,” “hike,”
“hut.” Other words which are questionable and require greater
judgment to discern their impact include “now,” and “shift.”
The use of “move” would be okay as long as the defense
actually shifts and the word is not intended to get the offense
to move. General noise, growling, or yelling in an attempt to
prevent the offense from hearing their signals is of course
prohibited. When in question the defensive signals are legal.
(Add the following as a new section after the line of scrimmage section)

(2020) Substitution page 112

If a substitute does not get inside the nine-yard mark and is observed and covered by the defense, no foul should be called.

A departing player is legally off the field if his next step would get a foot on or past the sideline.

Chapter 32 Positioning and Coverage – Scrimmage Plays

Scrimmage Plays

Positioning

(2020) Back Judge: page 177

The Back Judge should start about 20 to 25 yards deep depending on player/game situations and no closer than 10 yards from the nearest defensive back.
Coverage – Run Plays

(2020) Linesman and Line Judge: pages 178-179

On long runs, the official should trail the play by straddling the sideline. That will give him the best view if the runner steps on the sideline. He should not go all the way to the goal line because it is the Back Judge’s responsibility. He may use Crew Signal I to affirm to the Back Judge the runner stayed inbounds or otherwise communicate with the Back Judge. If the official is pressured by pursuing defenders during the run, he may move away from the sideline.
THE 40-SECOND PLAY CLOCK BECAME AN NFHS RULE IN 2019.

- USE APPENDIX E, NOT CHAPTER 8, FOR THE PLAY CLOCK.
- ***New Chapter 8 is now from old Appendix E***

**APPENDIX E**

**GAME TIMING FOR 40-SECOND PLAY CLOCK**

**Note:** This appendix can be used for 2018 while the 40-second play clock is an experimental rule and can be used in lieu of Chapter 8 if the rule change is passed.

Correct timing of the game is the responsibility of every official. Each official has responsibilities for stopping the clock as well as keeping it running. These responsibilities must remain consistent. All officials must know the clock status. The Line Judge must know the time remaining in the game on every play. The Line Judge must have a watch capable of properly timing the entire game in the event the game clock malfunctions.

At the end of every play, the Line Judge (the Back Judge is the back-up) must ensure the clock is continuing to run or is stopped based on the result of the just completed play.

**Before the Game**

The official in charge of timing – the Back Judge in a 5-man crew and the Line Judge in a 4-man crew – should meet with the timer, record his name on his game card, and synchronize watches. The first task is to set and begin pregame countdown, so the clock hits 0:00 at game time. A complete review of the timing instructions provided in Appendix 8 should be conducted. The following points should be emphasized:

- Situations and signals that start and stop the clock.
- Confirm the automatic horn is turned off.
- Procedure for resetting the clock, and if it can be reset to an exact time.
- Review Mercy Rule clock procedures (see the chapter entitled “State Association Adoptions for Colorado.”)

- Halftime: Start halftime clock on signal. Start the three-minute warm-up clock immediately after the halftime clock expires.
- Overtime: A three-minute intermission shall be placed on the clock. The clock will remain at zeroes for the remainder of the overtime periods.
This one year experiment from the 2019 season will not become a permanent change. The board of directors in June 2020 voted to not adopt this mechanic for the 2020 season and beyond. We will revert back to the mechanic as written in the current mechanics manual.

This experiment is required for a 5-Person Crew only and ONLY when an obvious scrimmage kick (punt) is anticipated. For 2019 there is no option to revert back to the old mechanic. The experiment is statewide. All umpires statewide will use this mechanic for 2019, there is no option to use the old mechanic.

The mechanic starts with the Umpire performing normal dead ball mechanics after 3rd down ends. After sensing an apparent punt, the Umpire places the ball at the forward progress spot and moves to a position similar to the Referee but on the opposite side of the punter.

All of the coverage requirements by the Umpire will remain the same including pre-snap keys and post-snap line of scrimmage coverage.

Important message regarding movement: The Umpire shall never move across the LOS after taking an initial position in R’s backfield and after the snapper has approached the ball. Situations that require the Umpire to remain in the Team B/R backfield on 4th down include: Down/Distance plays that are not obvious punts situations; when the crew is aware that Team K uses a rugby style run-punt option play on 4th down; or scoring kick/Try attempts.

Pre-Snap Position & Coverage:

1) Be prepared on 4th down prior to putting ball down to move to position opposite the R
2) Never move from normal position in the Team K’s backfield to Team K’s backfield after snapper is over the ball
3) Never swap sides of the kicker with the R. When placing the ball on the ground for the next play, look up to see where R plans to position himself and go opposite. CFOA recommends R stay on same side as previous down. (i.e. QB passing arm) to make this work efficiently; however, R may pregame a different approach.
4) Protect the snapper from roughing
5) Observe G-C-G-T for False Start movement.
6) If dead-ball foul occurs, hustle to LOS to control action. (note: A players will not know you are approaching from behind so be careful)

Post-Snap Coverage:
1) Observe blocking by K linemen and possible holding by R players as players transition downfield.
2) hustle downfield after ball is kicked observing action in front of returner/ball
3) DO NOT guess if they are punting ball. If it’s not obviously going to be a punt, move to the defensive backfield.
4) DO NOT watch punter. R has 100% punter responsibility. On broken play, triangulate your view with the R and Halo-Officiate.
5) DO NOT look to retrieve new “clean” ball after punt ends until all opposing players have separated DBO
6) U may take a little longer to arrive at the post-kick forward progress spot so other officials should cover the space accordingly after the play ends.

Additional coverage notes:

Pregame – where will R typically stand on punt situations? L still has LOS coverage until it no longer is a factor.

Situations that may require additional focus include:
1. Punt turns into scramble and/or pass play. R coverage remains with kicker/passer for roughing and LOS ruling.
2. Punter runs directly towards the LJ’s vacated sideline. Wings will have forward progress spot beyond the LOS and R will have forward progress behind the LOS.

The CFOA will send a Survey to the Membership mid-season and at the end of the season to request feedback. Here are some possible questions.

1. In your opinion, does it improve your coverage of punts as an Umpire/Crew?
2. Would the coverage improve if we required the R to always be on the HL side of the punter?
3. Were there unique situations that caused this experimental mechanic to be compromised?
4. Were there situations that would have been better covered under the original mechanic?

Reason for the Experiment:

During a scrimmage kick the Umpire has difficulty observing players while avoiding contact with players moving downfield. This mechanics will take the dangers out of the situation and allow for an outside-in view of the action in front of the kick returner.

The Experiment is for the 2019 season only and will be voted on by the Area Directors at the end of the season. The vote will be to continue the experiment, disavow the mechanic or implement it as a permanent change.