



## Stadium clock operations

MOFO Supplement 19.01 (supplement to Section 20.1 of the MOFO)

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### 1 Importance

Whilst all clock operators should strive for perfection, it is particularly important that stadium clocks are run correctly, since any errors will be visible to potentially thousands of spectators both in the stadium and watching TV/online. This is especially relevant since often these will be important regular season or playoff games which naturally draw a crowd. With this in mind, officials assigned to operate a stadium clock need to ensure they are well versed in Rules 3-2 and 3-3 and completely focused on the game.

Unless specifically mentioned, this guidance applies to both game and play clocks.

### 2 Checking the equipment

It is vital that stadium clock operators (SCOs) are familiar with the equipment they are using. Therefore, it is recommended you get to the ground well in advance of the required time before KO. Upon arrival, immediately locate where the stadium clocks and their operating points are. Start familiarising yourself with their workings so any issues can be discussed and resolved before the game starts.

You should be confident in how to start, stop, reset and (if necessary) switch off the stadium clocks. Check how the play clock is switched between 25-second and 40-second mode. If the game clock can be set to a specific time, know the sequence of commands necessary to do so.

You should be positioned in a location with a clear view of all parts of the field and the clocks themselves. Ideally, you will be seated in a warm, dry, indoor space with the operating equipment on a flat surface in front of you.

If the operating equipment is connected to the stadium clock via Wi-Fi or remote access, ensure the signal strength is sufficient (bear in mind that once a spectators arrive, the bandwidth may diminish). Contingencies for this event should be discussed before the game.

Also, make sure that any equipment that is being used to operate a stadium clock has adequate power for the full duration of the game. This is especially important if a clock is operated via a smartphone, tablet or laptop – ensure you have access to mains electricity power and/or backup battery with appropriate connectors.

### 3 Pre-game conference

Once confident of its operation, you should join the other officials for the pre-game conference. Discuss any findings with the crew and in particular the on-field timekeepers and the Referee.

Part of the pre-game discussion should include the operation of the clock and what happens if it deviates too far from the time kept on-field due to malfunction or significant errors by a SCO.

The pre-game discussion should also include what to do in the event a stadium clock needs to be switched off. Note that Rule 3-2-4-d requires that, if the play clock at one end of the field malfunctions, the one at the other end needs to be turned off too.

If non-officials are operating a stadium clock, they should be fully briefed in signals relating to the stopping and starting of the clock. Ideally, they should be accompanied/supervised by a qualified official.

## 4 Clock operation

As an SCO, you should be in radio contact with the officials on the field for the duration of the game. Have a spare radio available if possible.

Should there be more than one SCO, you should ideally be together or (second best) in radio contact with each other. It is not recommended for one person to operate both the game and play clocks.

During the game, you should remain totally focused on the game. This is particularly important in a close game or in the final few minutes of a half.

At the end of each play to keep focus, you may find it useful to verbalise the status of the clock, e.g., "Clock running" or "Starts on the Snap". This is especially important if there is a break in play for a penalty enforcement or injury timeout. All downs are important, but particularly critical are 4th downs (where the clock always stops at the end of the play).

Keep focused and watch the on-field officials for their signals for stopping and starting the clock, especially the Referee.

## 5 Dealing with problems

Report issues with a stadium clock to the on-field officials as soon as possible, but at an appropriate time when the ball is dead – do not distract them from a critical play or during a Referee announcement.

Follow any instruction to reset or switch off the clock from the referee or on-field timekeeper.

Should it be necessary to switch off a stadium clock, you will be instructed to do so by the Referee or on-field timekeeper. This should be done immediately.

If you are positioned close to the stadium announcer (which is preferable), ask them to announce to spectators that the clock is being switched off. When the stadium game clock is off, the on-field timekeeper can periodically relay the time remaining in the game to you by radio. In turn, you can inform the stadium announcer so that spectators are kept informed of the progress of the game.

At half-time, join the on-field officials to ensure that they are happy with the stadium clocks and their operation. Make this brief and do not interrupt their half-time discussion unnecessarily.

At the end of the game, remember to thank all your fellow personnel and those from the stadium who have helped you set up. Remember to retrieve any items of equipment you have used – radios, power leads etc. and join the on-field officials for any debrief.

## 6 Acknowledgements

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