

General Instructions for Electronic Clock Operators
(from Section J – 2018 GHSA Football Officials Manual)

Reporting to the Game Site

1. Report to the site at the same time as the rest of the crew.
2. Arrive dressed as the rest of the crew, depending on your associations' requirements.

Participating in the Pre-Game Meeting

1. Synchronize time with the Field Judge (FJ) like all other crew members.
2. Be prepared to discuss your role in the game like all other crew members.
3. Be prepared to discuss what to do if the field clock fails during the game and you have to come down to the field to keep time with your auxiliary timer.
4. Agree with R on how you will signal your readiness just prior to any free kick.
5. Ask any questions that you have about how to be the ECO for this game. Don't leave the pre-game meeting with questions in your mind about your role.

Special Equipment Needed by ECO

1. The ECO wears a complete game uniform. However, you do not need flags, beanbags or whistles in your ECO role. Other equipment may be useful. Depending upon local association requirements, keeping a game card may be a good idea, for example.
2. The ECO does need some special equipment and supplies:
 - a. An alternate or auxiliary timer other than the field clock. Any clock with a stopwatch type feature that will count down from 20 minutes will work.
 - b. Something to signal readiness to R prior to each kickoff. This can be a small flashlight, a red LED or your hat. What is satisfactory for any particular game depends on R's choice.
 - c. The crew line-up cards if provided by your local association (2 copies, obtained from R). One is for use by the stadium announcer; the other is for use by a GHSA evaluator, if any.
 - d. Paper and pen or pencil for recording events as required by your local association.

Going to the Field from Pre-Game Meeting

1. Go directly to the location of the clock controls, usually the press box.
2. Leave the pre-game crew meeting in time to have COMPLETED your pre-game clock checks and have the clock running down to kick-off time NOT LATER THAN 30 minutes before the game's scheduled kickoff time. For example, at latest the clock would be set at 7 PM to 30 minutes and counting down to zero if scheduled kick-off is 7:30 PM. This generally means the ECO must be at the clock control point 40 minutes before kick-off.

Testing the Clock under GHSA Procedures

1. Most sites have electronic controls. Some sites still have electro-mechanical controls. Either way, know how to set time, start and stop the clock and adjust the time should you be requested to do so. This has to be practiced. Pre-game is the time to practice. Special care should be taken with on/off switches that operate off a pigtail (make sure the pigtail is tightly attached to the control box and that the on/off feature works consistently however the pigtail is held/used by you). Do not wait until game time to discover problems! During this practice time you have ample opportunity to fix any problems you have with the setup (sightlines to the field,

location of the control box, etc.). The GHSA requires that the following minimum tests be performed:

- a. Set the clock to 5 minutes.
- b. Allow it to run down to zero, note whether the horn does (or does not) sound as it should. If it does not, this information needs to be relayed to game management via the LJ and to R before the start of the game.
- c. Compare time on the clock with your alternate countdown timer. Be sure they are in essential agreement. If not, inform R before the game starts.
- d. Be sure the clock starts and stops correctly.
- e. After the tests are successfully completed, set the clock to the remaining time before scheduled kick-off and allow the clock to run down to zero. However, do NOT allow the horn to sound IF it would interrupt any late pre-game ceremony such as the playing of the National Anthem.
- f. If there is a stadium announcer or an evaluator (from either GHSA or your local association) present, offer them their copy of the crew list.
- g. Set the clock to 12:00 and wait for the game to start.

Game Procedures

1. The ECO cannot “make” a game, but the ECO can surely “break” a game. Your concentration on your duties is essential to the smooth conduct of the game. Be prepared to take your responsibilities seriously, or don’t take the assignment. Someone else who would take the assignment seriously is staying at home so you can work this job. Honor them by giving your best effort.
2. Your job is to operate the clock ONLY. Do NOT give commentary on the game or how it is being officiated. You may answer specific questions asked of you by an evaluator, if any. But questions asked by any other people should be politely deflected. You may tell them, correctly, that you are prohibited by GHSA policy from making any comments on the game or the way it is officiated.
3. Do NOT operate anything but the clock. You are NOT being paid to keep the score, the down and distance or time-out count on the scoreboard. You may change the quarter indication on the scoreboard when the quarter changes.
4. The length of a quarter in high school varsity football is 12 minutes.
5. You must know the various signals made by the on-field officials and what impact, if any, these have on the clock. Follow the instructions of ANY official who is stopping the clock. The official signals are numbered by NFHS from 1 through 47. (See these in the NFHS rule book.) This is how these numbered signals affect the clock:
 - a. Stop the clock (if running or keep it stopped): signals 3, 5, 6 and 10.
 - b. Start the clock (or continue running if already running): signal 2.
 - c. Do NOT start clock on snap: 1* - note the * denotes the special case of how a ball is marked ready for play for an un-timed down. Otherwise, the clock DOES start on any snap if it was not previously running. Many Referees will remind you, explicitly, that they want you to start the clock on the snap by pointing at the ball as they blow the ball ready for play. However, you must not count on this.
 - d. Signals with NO IMPACT on the clock running: ALL Others. However, the clock should already be stopped when R gives any of these signals.
 - e. There is an old adage: “The clock is your friend when it is running.” Your job is NOT to run the clock when you feel like it, but to run it on command of the crew on the field. They know the adage; they will keep it running properly. When in doubt, the clock runs.
 - f. Every time you either start or stop the clock, you need to look at the clock (and your auxiliary timer) to be sure that each is either running or not running, as appropriate to your intent.

- g. Plays near the sideline SHOULD result in the covering official “winding the clock” (signal 2) if play ended inbounds at play’s end. It may be followed immediately by a stop the clock indication (signal 3) in the case of reaching the line-to-gain (1st down) or when a live-ball penalty has been called. You have to be alert for such a combination.
- h. The “try” (extra point play after a touchdown) is ALWAYS an un-timed down. This should be signaled by the Referee (signal 1*); but if he fails to do this, do NOT run the clock during the try.
- i. The Referee may require a signal from the ECO that the ECO is ready for any free kick.
- j. During a free kick, the clock does not start until it has been legally touched inbounds. The covering official who sees a legal touch of the ball inbounds will wind the clock (signal 2).
- k. Near the end of both halves of the game, especially, operation of the clock becomes a significant aspect of the game. Your operation should be consistent throughout the game. Generally, it takes the greater portion of a second to see, read and process a stop-the-clock signal of any type. As a consequence, there should NOT be a stopped clock with under a second left in either half.
- l. Prior to taking charge of the field, the Referee should remind the ECO that if the game clock is stopped with two seconds or less in any period and will start on the Referee’s signal, run the clock to zero if the ball is legally snapped.

Overtime

If a game goes into overtime, the need for the game clock has ended. All overtimes are un-timed events. Leave the press box and come down to the field on the side of the chain crew. Stay in the vicinity of the chain crew. This will keep you close to the action and will facilitate your leaving the field with the balance of the crew at the end of overtime. Do NOT leave the field until game’s end. We arrive and work as a crew; we will also leave as a crew.

ALSO (from Section M– 2018 GHSA Football Officials Manual)

25-Second Clock Operation

Whether the 25-second clock is operated by a separate 25-second clock operator or the Field Judge, the same set of principles apply. The clock is set to 25 seconds before every down. It starts on the Referee’s ready-for-play signal per rule 3-6-1. The clock is to be reset to zero at the snap or when the ball is legally put into play during a free kick down.