



COLLEGE FOOTBALL OFFICIATING, LLC

Officiating and Coaching Guidelines: Clapping as a Defensive Team Signal

Offensive and defensive teams may legally use a variety of signals in preparation for the snap. The offensive team has wide latitude in this regard, as long as the signals do not constitute a false start. The defensive team is more restricted; while they may give signals that prompt changes of position and alignment, by rule these signals may not disconcert the offense or simulate the sound or cadence of the offensive starting signals (Rule 7-1-5-a-5).

Clapping the hands has emerged as a way for offensive teams to give signals. This has been established across the country as an offensive team cadence to communicate starting signals. Defensive teams have only recently begun to use clapping, which thus gives it the appearance of having the intent to mimic the offense. Therefore, the use of clapping by the defensive team is in the same category as voice signals such as the sound “hut,” the use of which is clearly contrary to the spirit and intent of the rule and has long been prohibited.

We are directing our officials to treat clapping by the defense prior to the snap as an attempt to simulate the offensive team’s starting signals. Thus, this action is a foul under Rule 7-1-5-a-5.

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