

## Racing Rules of Sailing

### Case 54

A submission from the Royal Yachting Association

#### Purpose or Objective

Revise Case 54 to comply with the RRS 2017 and to provide a simple and clear statement of the obligations of boats when making and responding to a hail for room to tack.

#### Proposal

Delete existing Case 54 and replace with this new Case.

### CASE 54

#### **Rule 20, Room to Tack at an Obstruction**

*A boat that hails for room to tack at an obstruction must give the hailed boat sufficient time to respond before tacking herself. The hailing boat is entitled to hail as soon as safety requires her to act under rule 20.*

*The hail must make the requirement clear and be as loud as necessary to be heard under the prevailing conditions and should, if necessary, include additional signals. If the hailed boat does not respond, the hailing boat should repeat her hail. The lack of a response from the hailed boat does not require the hailing boat to hold her course.*

#### **Assumed Facts**

Boat A is sailing close-hauled on port tack towards an obstruction that she must tack to avoid. Boat B is sailing close-hauled one boat length to windward and one boat length astern of A. A hails B for room to tack.

#### **Question 1**

How quickly must B respond?

#### **Answer 1**

When the boats are clearly approaching an obstruction at which A will need room to tack, B must be alert to the situation and anticipate a hail from A so that her response is prompt.

Rule 20.2(c) requires B to respond either by immediately replying “you tack” or by tacking as soon as possible. If there is no immediate hail of “you tack”, A must give B the time required for a competent, but not necessarily expert, crew, in the prevailing conditions, to prepare for and execute her tack in a seamanlike manner.

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### **Question 2**

What should A do if B does not respond to her hail?

#### **Answer 2**

Although the rule does not require a further hail, it is strongly recommended that, if the circumstances permit, A should hail again as loudly as possible.

The lack of a response from B does not mean that A must hold her course. In the situation described, A is right of way boat and is entitled to luff as far as head to wind provided that, in doing so, she gives B room to keep clear (rule 16.1). However, if A passes head to wind, she must keep clear of B (rule 13).

### **Question 3**

As A is approaching the obstruction, how soon is she entitled to hail for room to tack?

#### **Answer 3**

A may hail for room to tack at the time that, to avoid the obstruction safely, she needs to begin the process described in rule 20. She may hail at the moment that allows her sufficient time, in the prevailing conditions, to

- hail B for room to tack;
- give B time to respond (see Answer 1, above);
- give time for any third boat that must respond for A to have room to tack (see case 113);
- tack herself, as soon as possible thereafter, in a seamanlike manner and avoid the obstruction.

### **Question 4**

What action by A constitutes a hail as required by rule 20?

#### **Answer 4**

A hail is primarily a verbal signal. Rule 20 does not prescribe the words to be used but, to meet the requirements of the rule, the hail must clearly convey that A requires room to tack. The hail must be as loud as is required, in the prevailing conditions, to be heard by B. If the conditions are such that even the loudest possible hail may not be heard, it would be prudent for A to make additional signals to draw the attention of B to the obstruction and of A's need to tack to avoid it. Such additional signals might include, for example, physical gestures, radio transmission, or, at night, light signals.

#### Current Position

Case 54 as withdrawn in accordance with approved submission 202-14.

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Reason

The amount of time needed for hailing and responding is often contentious. While the time needed will depend on the prevailing conditions and the number of boats that must respond, this case sets guidelines for hailing and responding. Rule 20 is primarily a safety rule and it is incumbent on all competitors to be aware of potential dangers, to be prepared to respond promptly and to use every reasonable method of communication.

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