

Racing Rules of Sailing

Definitions, Obstruction

A submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee

Proposal

Obstruction An object that a boat could not pass without changing course substantially, if she were sailing directly towards it and one of her hull lengths from it. An object that can be safely passed on only one side and an area so designated by the sailing instructions are also *obstructions*. However, a boat *racing* is not an *obstruction* to other boats unless they are required to *keep clear* of her, ~~give her room or mark-room~~ or, if rule 22 applies, avoid her. A vessel under way, including a boat *racing*, is never a continuing *obstruction*

Current Position

As Above.

Reason

It is not necessary to designate a boat racing as an obstruction to other boats when they are required to give her room or mark-room. The words 'give her *room* or *mark-room*' in the definition serve unnecessarily to complicate the application of the Part 2 rules when three or more boats are involved and both rules 18 and 19 apply. Q&A 2009-024 illustrates this point. It is interesting to note that the same complications due to the words 'give her *room*' could have arisen under the rules in effect from 1997 to 2008, but the community of competitors, judges and umpires failed to notice that these words made boats obstructions in many mark rounding situations involving three or more boats.

The proposal markedly simplifies both the definition Obstruction and the application of the rules in many circumstances, and preserves the intended meaning of the rules.

Q&A 2009-024 indicates that if these words are not deleted from the definition the application of rules 18 and 19 to mark roundings involving three or more boats could become very difficult for competitors and officials. To avoid this possibility, it is recommended that the change be made effective on 1 January 2010 under Regulation 31.1.2.