

Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule C6.5(b)

A submission from the Danish Sailing Association

Purpose or Objective

To improve consistency when giving red flag penalties.

Proposal

C6.5 Umpire Decisions

- (b) The red-flag penalty in rule C5.3 shall be used when a boat **becomes clearly ahead, and this happens only** ~~gained a controlling position as a result of breaking a rule, but the umpires are not certain that the conditions for an additional umpire-initiated penalty has been fulfilled.~~

Current Position

As above.

Reasons

The current rule for the red flag penalty is based on the concept of “controlling position”. This concept has turned out to be interpreted quite differently between umpires. Two typical examples of scenarios are:

1. On the downwind leg, a boat with a leeward overlap is subject to rule 17 as they are approaching the layline
2. When leaving the downwind mark, one boat is a boatlength ahead with a penalty

For both scenarios, some umpires argue that the boat considered is in a controlling position while others argue the opposite. Thus it is unclear to umpires how the concept should be interpreted.

Some umpires also use the red flag based only on the last part of the sentence (“but the umpires are not certain ...”) even if the boat to be penalized has not gained anything. This use is like a “light version” of a double penalty or a “one and a half penalty”. Yet this use is not supported by the rule.

The different interpretations of the basic concept of “controlling position” and the unsupported use of the rule imply that the red flag penalty is used inconsistent across international umpires. It is also one of the most difficult penalties to explain to new umpires, spectators and media.

The purpose of this submission is to improve consistency in the use of the red flag penalty by basing it on two simple tests: (1) became clearly ahead, and (2) it happened only because of the rule breach.
