

## ISAF Racing Rules Question and Answer Service



### **Q&A 2009-009**

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#### Situation

In an offshore race a fleet of eleven Hobie 16 catamarans passed through gate 1. Winds were light and variable except in squalls. Visibility at times was severely affected by the rain.

A sailing instruction stated that:-

“If in the sole discretion of the Race Committee, boats cannot be permitted for safety or other reasons to complete a leg of a course or it is not possible to finish a leg, boats will be scored at the time that they passed through the previous gate. This amends RRS 35 and Appendix A4.”

After discussion with the race officer the safety controller at the rear of the fleet was given discretion to stop racing with sufficient time to be able to pass dangerous reefs before nightfall. Accordingly half an hour after this discussion, towing commenced. Eight boats were taken under tow, some only accepting the tow on the basis that they were being instructed to stop racing. However from the time that the discussion with the race officer ashore had taken place all communication was lost between the race officer, the safety controller and safety boats at Gate 2.

Whilst the eight boats at the rear of the fleet were being taken under tow the three remaining boats continued to race.

After the eight boats had been taken under tow the three remaining boats passed through gate 2 which had still had no contact with the safety controller and the race officer. No abandonment, shorten course or other signals were shown as the three boats passed through gate 2. A safety boat at gate 2 advised the remaining three boats (out of sight of, or contact with the rest of the fleet) that the race was still in progress and stated that they could continue racing.

Boats were initially scored at the time they passed through gate 1 but then the scoring was changed to score the boats which passed gate 2 in the order they passed through gate 2 with other boats scored as for a retirement.

Following the change in scoring redress was requested by a boat in the second group of eight boats which had been instructed to take a tow. Redress was also requested by a boat in the leading group of three boats. Both parties were present, together with the race officer at the redress hearing.

Redress was granted because of errors and omissions made by the race committee. The protest committee decided to score the leg on the basis of the time and order of passage through gate 1 on the basis of the sailing instruction quoted above being fairest to all.

*All published answers are based upon the 2009-2012 Racing Rules of Sailing*

Question 1

Is there conflict between rule 4 and the sailing instruction quoted above?

Answer 1

No. The race committee may always shorten or abandon for safety reasons. Furthermore, in some circumstances and particularly with juniors, a sailing instruction that requires a boat to accept help when the race committee decides she is in need of help will be valid.

Question 2

Should the sailing instruction have also referred to rule 32?

Answer 2

Yes. The last sentence of rule 32.2 should have been specifically referred to, stating that rule 32.2 had been changed so that the course could be shortened after the first boat crossed the new finishing line.

Question 3

To make the intention of the race committee more clear, should there have been reference in the sailing instruction to the race being “shortened” at the previous gate.

Answer 3

Yes.

Question 4

Provided that there is a clear instruction in the sailing instructions can the race be shortened in this way without the use of flag or other signals.

Answer 4

Yes. The sailing instruction should include a reference to Race Signals ‘S’ and state the change.