

## ISAF Racing Rules Question and Answer Service



### **Q&A 2009-027**

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#### Situation:

This incident occurred at the start of a handicap cruiser race. Race duration expected to be from 4-8 hours depending on boat type, and in wind conditions of around 7 knots.

The sailing instructions defined the location of the starting line, and that it would be delineated by a committee boat and by a navigation mark. They did not specify whether the committee boat was at the starboard end of the line, or in any other way define in which direction the boats should start. The starting line was laid approximately perpendicular to the wind direction. The first mark was to leeward of the line, on a heading which was at an angle of approximately 30 degrees from the line itself.

Some boats started in each direction, there was evidence that the Race Committee had attempted to give verbal instruction to some boats shortly before the start to resolve the mess they saw developing. Those which started to windward rounded the Race Committee boat as soon as possible, and bore away to the mark. They were disadvantaged by taking the initial tack away from the mark.

Shortly after the start, there was a collision between boat A that was starting on starboard to windward, and boat B on port, which was intending to start to leeward and was crossing the line in the opposite direction. The starboard boat had cleared her starting line before the collision.

#### Question 1:

Can a race be started from a line that does not have a defined starting direction?

#### Answer 1:

The starting line must be described in the sailing instructions. The definition Start defines the direction from the pre-start side to the course side without any requirement that it be further described in the sailing instructions.

#### Question 2:

If the answer to Question 1 is yes, would a Protest Committee be correct in abandoning the race if it determined that some boats were significantly disadvantaged through their choice of starting direction?

#### Answer 2:

Once a protest committee has decided that a boat is entitled to redress it is required to 'make as fair an arrangement as possible for all boats affected,' For a boat to be

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

eligible for redress, the worsening of her score must have been through no fault of her own. By starting contrary to the definition Start, a boat will fail that test. However, if it was not reasonably possible for the competitors to clearly identify which way they were expected to cross the starting line in order to comply with the definition, one option available to a protest committee under these circumstances would be to let the results of the race stand. ISAF Case 82 describes a similar situation at a finishing line,

Question 3:

If the Protest Committee was correct in abandoning the race, were the boats no longer subject to the Racing Rules of Sailing at the time of the collision?

Answer 3:

The boats were racing and were subject to the Racing Rules of Sailing. That is not affected by any later decision of a protest committee to grant redress by abandoning the race. The effect of the abandonment is that penalization for breaking a rule of Part 2 is not possible - see rule 36.