

ISAF Racing Rules Question and Answer Service



Q&A 2009-033

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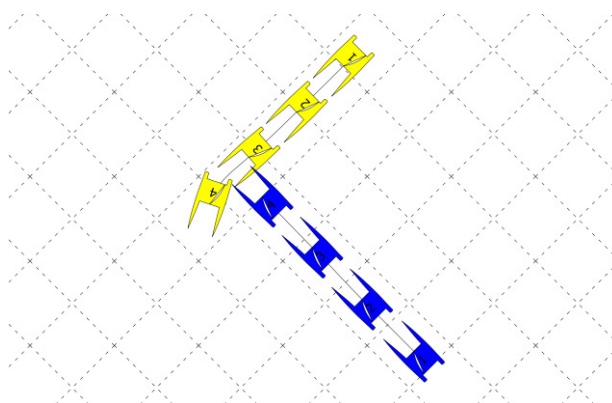
Situation:

The boats are Extreme 40 catamarans.

Yellow is sailing downwind on starboard; Blue is sailing upwind on a different leg on starboard, overlapped to leeward of Yellow.

Yellow sails over the top of Blue. Blue holds her course throughout. There is contact between the bow of Blue and the aft port quarter of Yellow (last 15cm or so). Yellow tries to avoid the contact 'at the last minute' by bearing away.

The diagram refers.



Question

Under rule 14, Yellow must avoid contact if it is reasonably possible to do so.

Does the fact that Yellow had the option to bear away or luff before reaching Blue mean she has had reasonable possibilities to avoid contact?

Or need Yellow only take action to avoid contact when it is clear to her that a collision course has been established between her and Blue and she must do something to avoid contact (i.e. here when she is crossing and realises she is not going to keep clear without further action?).

Answer

Rule 14 requires all boats to avoid contact if reasonably possible. When a keep-clear boat approaches a right-of-way boat on a converging course it is in all but the most extraordinary cases reasonably possible to avoid contact. In addition, when a keep-clear boat sails a course to pass directly in front of a right-of-way boat, it is always reasonably possible to avoid contact if appropriate action to keep clear is taken early enough.

In addition, in a situation as described, when the right-of-way boat realises that the keep-clear boat is not going to keep clear, she too has an obligation under rule 14 to try and avoid contact.

In this case, it was reasonably possible for Yellow, as the keep-clear boat, to have avoided contact by luffing or bearing away before she reached Blue. It was also reasonably possible for Blue to have avoided contact when it became clear to her that Yellow was not keeping clear. This she failed to do. 'However, Blue, as the right-of-way boat, could only be penalised under this rule if the contact caused injury or damage to either boat.'