

ISAF Racing Rules Question and Answer Service



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Situation

Racing rules 49 to 54 do not apply at the 33rd America's Cup. There are no relevant class rules. Please consider the following systems:

1. Sucking air from multiple points of the sail surface.
2. Expelling air from multiple points of the sail surface.
3. Expelling air from the leech of the sail.
4. An arrangement where air is expelled and sucked from alternating points on the sail surface, where the volume of air that is sucked into the surface is equal with the volume of air expelled.

The sucking and/or expelling of the air would be driven by a powered pump arrangement.

The movement of the air by the pump is itself not providing any net measurable lift; these actions will improve the airflow so the mast / sail arrangement will become more efficient (increasing lift).

Question

Do any of these systems break the racing rules (ignoring rules 49 to 54)?

Answer

The Racing Rules for Sailing have been written based on the historical background of our sport and it is recognized that not all future eventualities or developments can be covered.

Provision exists for class rules to change a number of rules as detailed in rule 86.1(c) and rule 42 is one such rule. Changes to rule 42 could also be made in accordance with rule 86.2. Unless rule 42 has been changed to permit the use of the suggested systems, they would not comply as all four systems rely on pumping or sucking air and therefore the boat would not be competing by using 'only the wind' as stipulated in rule 42.1.