

Racing Rules of Sailing, Rule 18.2 (c)  
Not Overlapped at the Zone

A submission from the Canadian Yachting Association

**PROPOSAL:**

**18.2 Giving Room; Keeping Clear**

**(a) OVERLAPPED – BASIC RULE**

When boats are *overlapped* the outside boat shall give the inside boat *room* to round or pass the *mark* or *obstruction*, and if the inside boat has right of way the outside boat shall also *keep clear*. Other parts of rule 18 contain exceptions to this rule.

**(b) OVERLAPPED AT THE ZONE**

If boats were *overlapped* before either of them reached the *two-length zone* and the *overlap* is broken after one of them has reached it, the boat that was on the outside shall continue to give the other boat *room*. If the outside boat becomes *clear astern* or *overlapped* inside the other boat, she is not entitled to *room* and shall *keep clear*.

**(c) NOT OVERLAPPED AT THE ZONE**

If a boat is *clear ahead* at the time she reaches the *two-length zone*, the boat *clear astern* shall thereafter *keep clear*. If the boat *clear astern* becomes *overlapped* outside the other boat she shall also give the inside boat *room*. If the boat *clear astern* becomes *overlapped* inside the other boat she is not entitled to *room*. ~~If the boat that was clear ahead passes head to wind, rule 18.2(c) no longer applies.~~

**CURRENT POSITION AS AT NOVEMBER 2002**

See above.

**REASON:**

Clarity and consistency with the other parts of rule 18.

The preamble that was added to rule 18 for the 2002-2004 rules defined room at a mark or obstruction as "including room to tack or gybe when either is a normal part of the rounding manoeuvre."

The preamble was intended to make the definition of room at a mark clearer - which it does admirably except in the case of rule 18.2 (c) because the last sentence still retains an exception to the simplifying precept of "including room to tack or gybe".

The last sentence of the current rule gives rise to interpretations that many sailors and judges find hard to understand or explain. Because of the exception, the rules that apply may change from 18.2(c) to 18.2(a) as the boats go round the mark and thus the right of way between them may change radically.

The difficulties that arise are detailed in a recently revised umpires call (see UMP 30, Question 1) which shows how the current last sentence of rule 18.2(c) complicates the

rules situation. The question of "who to penalise" depends on the minutiae of how an inside overlap was established which in turn depends on a very small difference in the positions of the boats in a dynamic situation where both boats are altering course. Even when an umpires' boat is positioned to see the situation, it is believed that some umpires will see it one way and "Penalise Yellow". Others may see the reverse and "Penalise Blue" or make an arbitrary decision.

The last sentence of rule 18.2(c) therefore leads to ambiguity and subjective interpretations of a common situation.

Deleting the last sentence of rule 18.2(c) will be a real service to sailors. It will remove ambiguity and lead to a purely objective interpretation of the rule. A boat clear ahead at the zone will have the right to tack around the mark and boats that are clear astern at the zone shall keep clear without exception. Any doubt about whether a boat was clear ahead or was overlapped at the zone being neatly resolved by rule 18.2(e).