Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule 14

A submission from US SAILING

Proposal

Change rule 14 to:

14 AVOIDING CONTACT

A boat shall avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible. However, a right-of-way boat or one taking room or mark-room to which she is entitled to room or mark-room [No further changes.]

Current Position

See above.

Reason

The current rule has undesirable implications in situations in which a boat entitled to room or mark-room is given that room or mark-room, but does not avail herself of it.

Here is an example. Suppose that boats W and L are approaching a leeward mark to be left to starboard. Both are on starboard tack and they are overlapped when they reach the zone. W is entitled by rule 18.2(b) to mark-room from L, and L gives W mark-room. Despite having mark-room, W bears off and makes contact with L. There is no damage or injury. (Case 70 covers a similar incident.)

It would have been easy for W to have avoided contact with L. She could have done so by simply availing herself of the mark-room that L had given her. However, under current rule 14, W cannot be penalized for breaking rule 14 because:

• she is a boat entitled to mark-room,
• at no time was L not giving her mark-room, and
• the contact caused neither damage nor injury.

Under the proposed wording for rule 14, W would be penalized for breaking rule 14 because at the time of the contact she was not taking the mark-room that L was giving her.

The proposed rewording of rule 14’s second sentence brings the implications of that sentence into accord with the intent of the sentence – i.e., to protect a boat from penalization only when

• she is taking room or mark-room to which she is entitled,
• the boat required to giver her a room or mark-room does not do so, and
• there is contact that causes neither damage nor injury.