Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule 18.2(c)

A submission from the Chairman of Race Officials Committee

Proposal

(c) When a boat is required to give mark-room by rule 18.2(b), she shall continue to do so even if later an overlap is broken or a new overlap begins. However, if either boat passes head to wind or if the boat entitled to mark-room leaves the mark or the zone, rule 18.2(b) ceases to apply.

Current Position

As above.

Reason

A mark rounding involves 3 phases. Phase 1 is when a boat is sailing to a mark after having entered the zone. Phase 2 is when it is rounding the mark. Phase 3 is when it is leaving a mark. Rule 18.2(c) states that a boat entitled to mark-room will retain this right throughout all three phases unless she passes head to wind or leaves the zone.

This means that a boat that was entitled to mark-room and has rounded the mark is still entitled to mark-room until she leaves the zone of the mark (unless she passes head to wind). This creates three problems.

The first problem is that the definition of mark-room only defines this for a boat sailing to the mark (phase 1) and rounding it (phase 2). It does not define what mark-room is for at a boat that is leaving the mark (phase 3). It was not intended that the right to mark-room should extend beyond the point where the boat has finished rounding the mark and no longer requires mark-room.

The second problem is that rule 18.5 exonerates a boat that is taking mark-room to which she is entitled. Yet this is unclear for a boat leaving a mark as rule 18.2(b) and (c) may give her right to mark-room but the definition of mark-room does not state what she is actually entitled to. Therefore, it is not defined which actions she is allowed to do and be exonerated for.

The third problem is that the rule is ambiguous when a boat entitled to mark-room leaves the mark and then returns to it. It is not clear currently whether the other boat has fulfilled her phase 1 and phase 2 obligations under 18.2(b), and that therefore 18.2(a) now applies, or whether 18.2(b) continues to apply.

All of these problems are resolved with the suggested amendment.

As this submission seeks to resolve current uncertainty amongst sailors and judges in the application of rule 18.2, it is recommended that either it is introduced with immediate effect (in particular if another change to the same sentence is implemented with immediate effect), or a case is published in the interim to clarify that this is how the current rule should be interpreted.