Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule 18.4

A submission from US SAILING

Proposal

18.4 Gybing

When an inside overlapped right-of-way boat must gybe at a mark to sail her proper course, until she gybes she shall sail no farther from the mark than needed to sail that course. Rule 18.4 does not apply at a gate mark.

Current Position

As above.

Reason

A primary purpose of rule 18.4 is to produce safe, orderly roundings at leeward marks. The last sentence of current rule 18.4 does not help accomplish this; in fact, it has the opposite effect.

At a gate mark, the last sentence of current rule 18.4 permits a tactic that is not allowed at any other mark at which the rule applies. It permits an inside overlapped right-of-way boat that is in the zone to abandon her proper course and sail in any direction she pleases. The most likely reason for doing this would be to gain an advantage over other boats by forcing them to make unexpected manoeuvres. This is contrary to the main purpose of rule 18.4. It can lead to surprises for outside boats, and it is an exception to the way this rule works at any other mark.

The deletion of the last sentence of the current rule is proposed because that sentence allows unpredictable last-second tactical manoeuvres inside the zone and because it is not necessary in order to permit the inside boat to sail her proper course around either gate mark. Rule 18.4 with that sentence removed will provide the same ‘game’ at a gate mark as at any other mark where the rule applies.

In addition, the deletion of the last sentence of rule 18.4 makes the rule simpler by eliminating an exception.