Racing Rules of Sailing

Definition Start, Finish, Case 145

A submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee

Proposal 1 Purpose or Objective

Allow the Race committee to provide clarity to competitors when describing courses.

Proposal 1

Change the definition of Finish and Start as follows:

**Finish** A boat *finishes* when, after *starting* and *sailing the course*, any part of her hull crosses the finishing line *in the direction as described in the sailing instructions, or, if not described in the sailing instructions*, from the course side. However, she has not *finished* if after crossing the finishing line she

(a) takes a penalty under rule 44.2, or

(b) corrects an error in *sailing the course* made at the line.

**Start** A boat *starts* when, having been entirely on the pre-start side of the starting line at or after her starting signal, and having complied with rule 30.1 if it applies, any part of her hull crosses the starting line *in the direction as described in the sailing instructions, or, if not described in the sailing instructions*, from the pre-start side to the course side.

Current Position

See above

Reasons for Proposal 1

1. There are instances (usually in passage races) where the preferred direction of travel over a starting line or finishing line is not clear from merely describing the course side. This addition allows a race committee to clarify the direction they want the particular line to be crossed, while keeping the status quo within the definition for other races where the course side of a line is appropriate.

2. A race committee has a number of different rules to assist them in constructing a course. What may work in one instance may not be clear and simple in another. This change gives race committees all the tools needed to be able to provide a clear description of the course to be sailed.
Proposal 2 Purpose or Objective

In 2018 Case 145 was accepted by the RRC with a requirement for a suitable diagram to be included so the case can be more easily understood.

This case brings unintended consequences for courses that use islands and other navigation objects as marks of a course.

Proposal 2
Remove Case 145 and for the Racing Rules Committee to work on a new intention to review and re-issue a case regarding sailing the course and the string test.

Current Position

CASE 145

Definitions, Finish
Rule 28.2, Sailing the Course

A boat’s string, referred to in rule 28.2, when drawn taut, is to lie in navigable water only.

Question 1
Must the string referred to in rule 28.2, when drawn taut, lie in navigable water only?

Answer 1
Yes, rule 28.2 refers to ‘a string representing a boat’s track’. A boat’s track cannot pass over dry land, nor can it pass through non-navigable waters or through prohibited areas. It follows that, when drawn taut, the string must lie entirely in navigable waters; it passes to one side of non-navigable shallows, prohibited areas or other obstructions, and follows the path of a river.

Similar considerations apply to both the requirements in the definition Finish to cross the finishing line from the course side, and to pass through a gate from the direction of the previous mark. The course is described by a taut string that complies with the requirements of rule 28.2 and therefore the course is constrained to lie in navigable water as described above.

The diagram illustrates boat A’s taut string when a headland obstructs boats on a leg of the course. The course described in the sailing instructions was: ‘After starting, round Mark 1 to port and then
finish.' After rounding Mark 1 to port, A sailed as close to the headland as possible given her draft and the depth of the water at the time she was passing it. A’s string is shown touching Mark 1 and following A’s track around the shallow water at the north end of the headland. Because of the headland the ‘course side’ of the finishing line was north of the line. Therefore, to be recorded as having finished, A was required to cross the line from north to south (see the definition Finish). If A’s taut string was not constrained to lie in navigable water, it would follow the straight line across the headland from Mark 1 to the finishing line. Then, the ‘course side’ of the line would be south of the line, and A would be required to cross the line from south to north.

**Question 2**
In tidal waters, should navigable waters be considered at high tide or low tide?

**Answer 2**
Neither. Whether water at a particular location is navigable or not depends on the draft of the boat and the depth of water at the time the boat sails past that location.

**Reasons for Proposal 2**

1. This case now makes it impossible to round an island that is used as a mark of a course. This is because the string representing the wake (when drawn taut) will not touch the mark as there is nearly always water around the island that is not navigable.

2. The case does not give clarity for situations regarding islands. For example, using a modified diagram used in Case 145 (modified by turning the headland into an island) then there is no clarity as to the meaning of “from the course side” regarding the finish.

![Diagram](image)

Note: This is the reason why proposal 1 is included to allow the Race Committee to provide certainty for the direction of crossing the finishing line.

3. Having a case depend on what is navigable adds complexity to determining if a boat has sailed the course. Each boat’s course must be assessed, boats with different draft (both above and below the water) must be assessed to determine what side of a navigational object the string goes.

It is suggested that a new case would be correct using the principle that while the boat’s course must be in navigable water, the string test is to simply pull that string that represents the course taut and only have the string deflected by the marks of the course. This provides certainty to the course for all boats competing, not dependent on size, draught or tide at the time.