Racing Rules of Sailing

Part 2 Section C Preamble and Rule 20.1

A submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee

Purpose or Objective

To replace the overly broad second sentence of the Section C preamble with one that is limited to resolving the single conflict between rule 20 and other Section C rules and to place that sentence in rule 20 rather than in a preamble.

Proposal

SECTION C

AT MARKS AND OBSTRUCTIONS

Section C rules do not apply at a starting mark surrounded by navigable water or at its anchor line from the time boats are approaching the mark to start until they have passed them. When rule 20 applies, rules 18 and 19 do not.

20.1 Hailing and Responding

When approaching an obstruction, a boat sailing close-hauled or above may hail for room to tack and avoid another boat on the same tack. After a boat hails,

(a) she shall give the hailed boat time to respond;
(b) the hailed boat shall respond either by tacking as soon as possible, or by immediately replying ‘You tack’ and then giving the hailing boat room to tack and avoid her; and
(c) when the hailed boat responds, the hailing boat shall tack as soon as possible.
(d) From the time a boat hails until she has tacked and avoided the hailed boat, rule 18.2 does not apply between them.

Current Position

As above.

Reasons

The current rule does not clearly limit itself to interactions between the hailed and hailing boats, which raises the possibility that rules 18 and 19 can be unintentionally dis-applied with respect to
another neighbouring boat. It is also not clear when rule 20 starts and ceases to apply. The proposed language clarifies both questions.

There is no need to “switch off” rule 19 when rule 20 applies. A boat hailing at an obstruction under rule 20 is either leeward or clear ahead of the hailed boat. Because she has right-of-way, rule 19.2(a) gives her the right to choose to pass the obstruction by tacking. This resolves the common situation where two port-tack boats approach a starboard-tack boat: the windward port-tack boat’s claim to room under rule 19 to pass to leeward of the starboard-tack boat is invalidated when the leeward boat chooses to tack. This is exactly what is needed. Therefore rule 19 should apply when rule 20 applies. It is also essential that rule 19 does apply in some rule 20 scenarios when there is more than one obstruction.

Rule 20 can come into conflict with rule 18.2 when a port-tack hailing boat needs room to tack and avoid a starboard-tack boat inside the zone. If the hailed boat has mark-room because she is the inside boat the rules must, for safety, give priority to the hailing boat’s need to tack over her obligation to give mark-room. The proposed rule makes this clear.

There are no conflicts between rule 20 and other parts of rule 18. In fact it is desirable that rule 18.3 is clearly in force, as situations at windward marks involving rule 20 often also involve rule 18.3.

Preambles are less often read than rules. Placing this sentence within the rule where it arises will make Section C simple and easier to understand. The proposed rule will not arise unless rule 20 is part of the incident, so sailors will find this exception to rule 18 when they need it.

This submission was prepared by the ISAF Section C Working Party.