Racing Rules of Sailing

Rules 14(b), 21 and 64.1(a)

A submission from US Sailing

Purpose

To correct the erroneous belief that exoneration requires an action by a protest committee.

Proposal

Change rules 14(b), 21 and 64.1(a) as follows:

14 AVOIDING CONTACT

A boat shall avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible. However, a right-of-way boat or one entitled to room or mark-room

……

(b) is shall be exonerated if she breaks this rule and the contact does not cause damage or injury.

21 EXONERATION

When a boat is sailing within the room or mark-room to which she is entitled, she is shall be exonerated if, in an incident with a boat required to give her that room or mark-room,

(a) [no further changes]

64 DECISIONS

64.1 Penalties and Exoneration

When the protest committee decides that a boat that is a party to a protest hearing has broken a rule and is not exonerated, it shall disqualify her unless some other penalty applies. A penalty shall be imposed whether or not the applicable rule was mentioned in the protest. If a boat has broken a rule when not racing, her penalty shall apply to the race sailed nearest in time to that of the incident. However,

(a) when as a consequence of breaking a rule a boat has compelled another boat to break a rule, the other boat is shall be exonerated;

(b) [no further changes]

Consequential Change

In rule F2, change rule 14 as follows:
14 AVOIDING CONTACT

Rule 14(b) is changed to:

(b) **is shall be** exonerated if she breaks this rule and the contact does not cause damage, injury or a tangle.

Current Position

As above.

Reasons

1. Readers of *The Racing Rules of Sailing* and its derivatives (Cases, Call Books, etc.) are often under the impression that only a protest committee can exonerate a boat that is compelled to break a rule by another boat’s breach of a rule. In fact, a protest committee is rarely involved following incidents on the water. We want the same application of the rules involved in an incident, including exoneration, to apply whether or not a protest committee is involved.

2. Sportmanship and the Rules states that ‘A fundamental principle of sportsmanship is that when competitors break a rule they will promptly take a penalty, which may be to retire.’ This will be changed in 2021 to ‘A fundamental principle of sportsmanship is that when a boat breaks a rule and is not exonerated she will promptly take a penalty, which may be to retire.’ This submission brings the exoneration rules into alignment with the present tense that will be used in Sportmanship and the Rules starting in 2021.