Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule 18.3

A submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee

Proposal

18.3 Tacking When Approaching a Mark

If two boats were approaching a mark on opposite tacks and one of them changes tack, and as a result is subject to rule 13 in the zone when the other is fetching the mark, rule 18.2 does not thereafter apply. The boat that changed tack

(a) shall not cause the other boat that was fetching to sail above close-hauled to avoid contact her or prevent the other boat that was fetching from passing the mark on the required side, and

(b) shall give mark-room if the other boat that was fetching becomes overlapped inside her.

Current Position

As above.

Reason

Consider the following situation:
At a windward mark to be left to port, Grey and Black are fetching the mark on starboard tack with Black to leeward. At position 3 White tacks to leeward of Black. After White completes her tack, Black has to change course to keep clear of White, but Black does not need to sail above close-hauled. However Grey now needs to sail above close-hauled to keep clear of Black.

The proposed change from "to sail above close-hauled to avoid her" to "to sail above close-hauled to avoid contact" means that White breaks rule 18.3(a) in this situation. Under the current rule White does not break rule 18.3(a) as Grey's luff above close-hauled is not to avoid White. Under the proposed rule White does break rule 18.3(a) as she causes Grey to sail above close-hauled to avoid contact with Black. The latter is the desirable outcome because the purpose of the rule is to penalise a tack inside the zone that causes a fetching boat to have to sail above close-hauled.

The change, in three places in (a) and (b), of 'other boat' to 'boat that was fetching' is proposed for clarity and ease of reading.