Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule 48.1

A submission from the Chairman of the Oceanic and Offshore Committee

Purpose or Objective

To clarify that boats that are equipped with navigation lights must use them as required by IRPCAS 20(b), from sunset to sunrise, and 20(c) from sunrise to sunset in restricted visibility.

Proposal

Change rule 48.1 as follows:

48.1 When safety requires When so equipped, a boat shall sound fog signals and show lights as required by the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (IRPCAS) or applicable government rules.

Current Position

As above.

Reasons

1. The current wording of rule 48.1 can be interpreted that a boat does not need to show their navigation lights if not required for safety, i.e. if there are no other vessels in the vicinity. This may date from long ago when navigation lights took significant electrical power and sailboats routinely turned them off when there was no nearby traffic. Now that LED lights draw very little power, boats that are equipped with navigation lights should use them as required by the IRPCAS (see IRPCAS rule 20(b) and (c)). The RRS cannot change IRPCAS and should not attempt to do so.

2. This submission does not suggest that the RRS require the carrying of navigation lights and fog signals, that is best handled by the IRPCAS themselves for all vessels underway between sunset and sunrise, racing or not. Requirements for carrying navigation lights are sometimes also imposed by the event organizing authority, often via the Offshore Special Regulations.

3. By stating, “when so equipped” we avoid creating a problem within the RRS for small boats that happen to finish a race after sunset. Such boats will still violate IRPCAS, however.

4. This submission results from work by the Navigation Lights Working Party of the Oceanic and Offshore Committee, chaired by Rear Admiral Chris Oxenbould AO RAN (Rtd).