**Racing Rules of Sailing**

**Rule 50.4**

A submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee

**Purpose or Objective**

To align the distinction between a headsail and a spinnaker in rule 50.4 with modern sailmaking practice and with the rules of current handicap systems and most classes. To state more clearly the limited implications of rule 50.4.

**Proposal 1**

**50.4 Headsail**

The difference between a headsail and a spinnaker is that the width mid-girth of a headsail, measured between the midpoints of its luff and leech, does not exceed 75% of the length of its foot, and no other intermediate girth exceeds a percentage similarly proportional to its distance from the head of the sail. A sail tacked down behind the foremost mast is not a headsail.

**Current Position**

As above.

**Reasons for Proposal 1**

1. The change from “50%” to “75%” and the deletion of “and no other intermediate girth exceeds a percentage similarly proportional to its distance from the head of the sail” are made to reflect changes that have occurred in headsails in recent years. Modern headsails (especially jibs that do not overlap the mainsail) often have battens that enable them to have positive roach. Under current rule 50.4 such sails are not headsails, which flies in the face of today’s use of the term “headsail.”

2. Current rating rules rely on the distinction between a headsail and a spinnaker in order to restrict the use of so-called “‘tween sails”. Those rating rules currently use the 75% criterion in the proposal to limit the positive roach of headsails. In addition, those rating rules require spinnakers to have greater roach than that permitted for a headsail to prevent spinnakers from being used upwind.

3. The change from “does not exceed” to “is less than” is made to make the rule consistent with the wording of several identical rating system rules. The deletion of the last part of the first sentence is made for the same reason.

4. Other wording changes are made for simplicity and clarity.
Proposal 2

50.4 Headsail

For the purposes of the rules in this book, the difference between a headsail and a spinnaker is that the mid-girth of a headsail, measured from the mid-points of its luff and leech, does not exceed 50% of the length of its foot, and no other intermediate girth exceeds a percentage similarly proportional to its distance from the head of the sail. A sail tacked down behind the foremost mast is not a headsail.

Current Position

As above.

Reasons for Proposal 2

1. The addition of “For the purposes of the rules in this book” is proposed so that, regardless of how other documents or publications may describe the difference between a headsail and a spinnaker, the difference between them in The Racing Rules of Sailing will not be affected.

2. The term “headsail” is used as a noun in rules 50 and 54 and in Appendix G; the term “spinnaker” is used as a noun in rules 50 and C7.3(a) and in Appendix G. The phrase “the rules in this book” was chosen for the proposed addition because it is used in the definition Rule, and it includes, in addition to rules 1 – 91, the rules of relevant appendices.