Racing Rules of Sailing

New Case

A submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee

Proposal

CASE X

Rule 20.1, Room to Tack at an Obstruction: Hailing and Responding

When a boat hails under rule 20.1 for room to tack, all boats that can hear her hail and that will have to respond to give her that room must do so.

Assumed Facts

On a beat to windward Boats L, M and W are sailing close-hauled on starboard tack. They are approaching an obstruction and safety requires them to make a substantial course change to avoid it. The obstruction is not a mark. When the boats are in the positions shown in the diagram, L hails ‘Room to tack’ loudly enough to be heard by the crews of both M and W. When L hails, it is clear that M and W must both tack in order to give room to L, and M does not have room to tack and avoid W.

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Question 1

Is M required to hail W for room to tack immediately she hears L’s hail?

Answer 1

Yes. Since replying 'You tack' is not an option for M in this case, M is required to respond to L's hail by tacking as soon as possible. Therefore, if M cannot tack because of the presence of W, she should immediately hail W for room to tack to comply with rule 20.1(b). If she fails to do this, and as a result is unable to tack as soon as possible, she breaks rule 20.1(b).
**Question 2**

Does rule 20.1 require W to respond to L’s hail?

**Answer 2**

Yes. When a boat which is not adjacent to the hailing boat has heard the hail, and will have to respond before the hailing boat is able to tack, she is "another boat" in the context of rule 20.1 and she shall respond accordingly. In this case, since hailing 'You tack' to either L or M is not an option for W, she shall respond by tacking as soon as possible.

**Current Position**

None. This is a new case

**Reason**

Discussion among senior race officials has shown that not all of them recognize that a boat in W’s position is required by rule 20.1 to respond to a hail from a boat in L’s position. The proposed case makes it clear that all boats that can hear L's hail and that will have to respond to give her room to tack must do so. The case also makes it clear that the intermediate boat, M, cannot depend on W hearing the hail and must also hail.