Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule C2

A submission from the Danish Sailing Association

Purpose or Objective

To improve consistency when umpiring boats that are moving backwards in match racing.

Proposal

C2.8 Rule 21.3 is changed to 'A boat moving astern shall keep clear of one that is not.'

Renumber C2.9, C2.10 and C2.11 accordingly

Current Position

As above.

Reasons

The current rule 21.3 is umpired inconsistently in match racing. First, a boat moving astern will have different rights depending on the reason for the backwards movement. Second, the implications of the rule are not judged consistently. Consider the following scenarios:

1. A boat goes head to wind, with her sails flapping; after some time she stops and starts drifting astern
2. A boat goes head to wind, stops her forward momentum by backing a sail, releases it and then starts drifting astern with her sails flapping
3. A boat goes head to wind and the crew uses the jib to keep the boat head to wind by backing it alternately on either side. During this maneuvering she stops and then starts moving astern
4. A boat stops her momentum by backing a sail and keeps it backed as the boat starts moving astern

Experience shows that the current rule 21.3 is not interpreted consistently by sailors and umpires across these scenarios. There is agreement that the boat in (1) is not subject to 21.3, while the boat in (4) is. But there are different opinions about the rights of the boats in (2) and (3).

Match Racing Call UMP 2 clarifies the issue, but not completely. The proposed change will make the call unnecessary and improve consistency between umpires.

The proposed change implies a change to the game. Yet this change is desirable since it discourages the use of manoeuvres that lead to difficult situations with high risk of collisions.
change will result in all boats moving astern being treated in a consistent way and thereby make the rule simpler to understand and apply for sailors and umpires.