

Introduction

The Racing Rules of Sailing Questions and Answers are published on the World Sailing website and are a joint responsibility of the Racing Rules Committee and the Race Officials Committee.

The Q&A Panel is set up to provide a service to Race Officials, Member National Authorities and World Sailing Class Associations whereby they may submit questions through World Sailing concerning the Racing Rules of Sailing.

The answers are prepared by a panel of experienced race officials. The answers are not authoritative interpretations, but they are explanations of the Racing Rules of Sailing and represent an important service by providing carefully considered opinions from the members of the panel, who are appointed under World Sailing Regulations.

This service is not to be used as a 'substitute' appeal process; its purpose is to provide considered opinions on questions on the Racing Rules of Sailing.

Answers are always given to the questioner, but only Q&As of general interest are published in this booklet. It is intended that these Q&As are further considered for submission for a rule change, for inclusion in the World Sailing Case Book or Call Books, or for educational material in Race Officials Manuals.

This booklet replaces the 2017-2020 booklet. Past Q&As which have been considered of value, have been updated to the 2021-2024 version of the Racing Rules of Sailing and retained, all other Q&As have been removed.

There are two index lists. The first lists Q&As in publishing order and the second lists them per Racing Rules of Sailing sections, with 'other rules' listed last.

Last update: 9 January 2021

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Q&A 2017.004

retained

Translated versions of the Racing Rules of Sailing. What applies when there are differences?

Situation

Many National Authorities publish translated versions of documents, for example of the Racing Rules of Sailing. Sometimes, mistakes in translation change the meaning of the original document.

Question

When there are discrepancies, which document shall take precedence – the translation or the original version?

Answer

The Racing Rules of Sailing are published in English by World Sailing and will always take precedence over any translation, unless the translation of a particular racing rule has the status of a rule change as provided for in rules 85 and 86. A difference arising from a translation is not a valid rule change as it will not specifically refer to a rule and state the change. A statement in the notice of race or in the sailing instructions that a translation of the Racing Rules of Sailing will apply instead, does not comply with rules J1.1(2) and J2.1(1).

Q&A 2018.009

retained

Parties joining a hearing late

Question 1

At the beginning of a protest hearing, the protest committee checks if the parties are present. If none of the parties are present, how should the protest committee proceed?

Answer 1

If none of the parties are present at the time the hearing is scheduled, the protest committee should make sure that appropriate notice of the hearing has been given to the parties. It is then at the discretion of the protest committee to decide if they want to reschedule the hearing or continue with none of the parties present, under rule 63.3(b).

If the protest committee proceeds under 63.3(b), it should check the validity of the protest.

If the protest is found valid, the protest committee should try to establish the facts necessary to come to a conclusion and a decision. If there is not enough information in order to find the facts necessary to come to a conclusion, the protest must be dismissed.

Question 2

At the beginning of a protest hearing only one of the parties is present and the protest committee decides to proceed with the hearing under to rule 63.3(b). During the hearing, the other party arrives. What should the protest committee do?

Answer 2

Although it is not required by the rules, it is a good time-saving practice to promptly investigate whether the late party was unavoidably absent and if so, the protest committee should recommence the hearing. If the late party was not unavoidably absent, the protest committee must allow the late party to join the hearing at the current stage.

Rule 63.3(a) gives the parties the right to be present throughout the hearing of all the evidence, however evidence already given is not required to be given again for the benefit of a party that is late for no good reason.

Rule 63.5 requires the protest committee to decide the validity of the protest at the beginning of the hearing. The protest committee is not required to revisit the question of validity, unless evidence presented later causes them to do so.

Rule 63.6 requires the protest committee to take the evidence of the parties and their witnesses, so a late party is allowed to give evidence and call witnesses.

Question 3

In the situation of question 2, how late into the hearing should the missing party be allowed to join the hearing?

Answer 3

A party shall be allowed to join the hearing at any time throughout the hearing of the evidence. See rule 63.3(a).

Q&A 2018.010

retained

Damage without breaking a rule of part 2 or rule 31

Situation

While racing, a boat becomes entangled in the anchor line of a mark of the course. To free the boat, the crew cuts the anchor line of the mark and continues racing, leaving the mark to drift. She did not touch the mark.

Question

For the purposes of rules 44.1(b) and 60.3(a)(1), is the mark either damaged or seriously damaged?

Answer

Damage is only relevant to rules 44.1(b) and 60.3(a)(1) if it is serious damage. The serious damage may be to anybody or anything in the racing area in order for any of those rules to apply.

For the purposes of rule 44.1(b), the boat caused damage when her crew cut the mark's anchor line. Although this action caused serious damage, neither a rule of Part 2, nor rule 31 were broken, therefore rule 44.1(b) does not apply.

For the purposes of rule 60.3(a)(1), the protest committee may call a hearing under this rule if it believes that an incident occurred which may have resulted in injury or serious damage. It is not required that the incident is between two boats. The committee may also consider a breach of rule 2 and would then need to clearly establish whether recognized principles of sportsmanship or fair play have been violated. When doing so the committee might find it helpful to consider whether safety made the act of cutting the anchor line a seamanlike action under the prevailing circumstances.

The protest committee may also consider acting under rule 69.

Q&A 2019.006

retained

Appendix T and basic principle

Situation

Appendix T, Arbitration, applies.

At the start of a race a boat that was aware of touching a starting mark did not take a One-Turn-penalty at the time of the incident but instead took a Post-Race penalty under rule T1(a) upon returning ashore.

Question

Is the Post-Race Penalty under rule T1(a) appropriate for her breach?

Answer

No.

A fundamental principle of sportsmanship under the Racing Rules of Sailing is that when competitors break a rule, they will promptly take a penalty.

The Post-Race penalty under rule T1(a) is not an additional penalty option available to boats at the time of an incident. It is only available to boats realizing that they might have broken a rule when it is too late to comply with rule 44.2.

By being aware that she broke a rule and not promptly taking a penalty, the boat violated a fundamental principle of sportsmanship, therefore she also broke rule 2.

Q&A 2019.010

retained

World Sailing Classes as the organising authority of an event

Situation

Rule 89.1 lists the compliant organizing authorities. Rule 89.1(e) mentions an 'unaffiliated class association'. 'Affiliated' is defined further below as 'affiliated to the national authority of the venue'.

Question 1

What is an 'unaffiliated class association' for the purpose of the Racing Rules of Sailing?

Answer 1

Rule 89.1 states: 'In rule 89.1, an organization is affiliated if it is affiliated to the national authority of the venue; otherwise, the organization is unaffiliated'. A class association which is not affiliated to the national authority of the venue is unaffiliated.

Question 2

Where do World Sailing Class Associations fit into the scheme of rule 89.1?

Answer 2

A World Sailing Class Association that it is not affiliated to the national authority of the venue, is an unaffiliated organization for the purposes of rule 89.1, therefore rule 89.1(e) applies.

Q&A 2019.011

retained

Affiliation to the national authority

Situation

A national radio sailing association is affiliated to the World Sailing national authority but there is no provision to directly affiliate the radio sailing clubs to the national authority.

Question

Does an event organized by a club affiliated to a national radio sailing association conform to rule 89.1 when the national radio sailing association is affiliated to the national authority but the club itself is not directly affiliated?

Answer

Yes.

An organization may be affiliated to the national authority either directly or through affiliation to an entity which in turn is affiliated to the national authority. This is subject to any terms of affiliation from the national authority or the entity.

Q&A 2019.014

retained

A question on rules governing hearing reopenings

Situation

Rule 66 provides for the reopening of a hearing under various circumstances, including when significant new evidence becomes available.

Question 1

When a protest committee receives a request from a party to reopen a hearing, alleging that there is significant new evidence, how should it respond to that request?

Answer 1

Upon receiving a request to reopen a hearing, the protest committee should determine:

- if the request is timely under rule 66.2.
- if the evidence is new, including evidence due to a party being unavoidably absent. See rules 63.3(b), M4.2 and World Sailing Case 115.
- if the evidence is significant and might lead the protest committee to change its decision.

When all of the above requirements are met, the protest committee should decide to reopen the hearing.

Question 2

How do rules 61, 63.1, 63.2 and 65 apply in the circumstances?

Answer 2

Rules 61 and 63.1 apply only to a hearing and not to a request to reopen a hearing.

Rule 63.2 is not applicable to a request to reopen a hearing but if the protest committee decides to reopen a hearing, rule 63.2 requires that the parties are notified of the time and place of the reopening and are allowed reasonable time to prepare for it.

Rule 65 applies to both an original hearing and a reopened hearing. Although the requirement does not apply to a request to reopen a hearing, it is a well-established good practice to inform the party requesting a reopening of the outcome when the reopening is denied.

Question 3

Does a protest committee comply with rule 66 if it does not consider the alleged new evidence submitted with a request for reopening a hearing?

Answer 3

If the protest committee determines that either the request is not timely or the evidence is not new, it is not required to consider its significance. When the evidence is new and the request is timely, the protest committee should consider it. See answer 1.

Question 4

May a request for redress be based on an improper action or omission of a protest committee in relation to rule 66?

Answer 4

No.

A boat may not request redress if she was a party to the hearing. See rule 62.1(a).

Q&A 2020.001

retained

A question on rule 14

Question 1

In a breeze of 20-25 knots, two Lasers are sailing on a reach, on starboard tack, overlapped, with one boat length between them. While the windward boat is keeping clear, the leeward boat's rudder breaks, she luffs sharply and there is contact with damage between the boats.

Did any of the boats break rule 14?

Answer 1

When the leeward, right-of-way boat changed course without giving the windward, keep-clear boat room to keep clear, she broke rule 16.1 and, since there was contact, rule 14. The fact that she was out of control is not relevant. See World Sailing Case 99. It was not reasonably possible for the windward boat to avoid the contact; therefore, she did not break rule 14.

Question 2

In a breeze of 20-25 knots, two Lasers are sailing on a reach. The boat clear ahead capsizes. The boat clear astern, two boat lengths behind, tries to avoid but there is contact with damage between the boats. Did any of the boats break rule 14?

Answer 2

It is not possible for a Laser to capsize on a reach without changing course, therefore, when the clear ahead Laser capsized on a reach, her course certainly changed. When the clear ahead, right-of-way boat changed course without giving the clear astern, keep-clear boat room to keep clear, she broke rule 16.1 and, since there was contact, rule 14. The fact that she was out of control is not relevant. See World Sailing Case 99. It was not reasonably possible for the clear astern boat to avoid contact; therefore, she did not break rule 14. Additionally, it was not possible for the clear astern boat to avoid the capsized boat; therefore, she did not break rule 23.

Question 3

In a breeze of 20-25 knots two Lasers are overlapped on a reach with four boat lengths between them. The windward boat becomes clear ahead and capsizes two boat lengths ahead of the other boat, who tries to avoid but there is contact with damage between the boats. Did any of the boats break rule 14?

Answer 3

See answer 2.

Q&A 2020.004

retained

Calculating the appropriate redress

Situation

Boat A sailed 5 races in a qualifying series (races Q1-Q5) in which there was more than one fleet, and she qualified for the gold fleet in a subsequent final series of the regatta. There were 5 races scheduled in the final series (races F1-F5) and a boat's series score would be calculated from the scores from all of races Q1 to Q5 and F1 to F5.

Boat A sailed races F1 and F2 and finished first in both. In race F3, she was damaged beyond repair by a boat that was breaking a rule of part 2. She could not finish race F3 and could not sail in races F4 and F5. The protest committee decided that boat A was entitled to redress but that the redress given could not be based on her results in races Q1-Q5 because there was more than one fleet in those races. Instead, they decided that her score in races F3, F4 and F5 should be the same as a first place, which was the average of her results in races F1 and F2.

Question 1

Did the protest committee comply with World Sailing Case 116?

Answer 1

Yes.

World Sailing Case 116 requires that when giving redress, fewer than half of a boat's race scores included in her series score are based on average points. In this situation, the boat in question has finished in 7 out of 10 races, therefore less than half her race scores were based on average points.

Question 2

In making this decision, did the protest committee determine the correct redress?

Answer 2

It depends.

World Sailing Case 116 limits the number of races for which average points may be given but is silent regarding how the average points are calculated.

When the protest committee decides that a boat is entitled to redress under rule 62, it shall make as fair an arrangement as possible for all boats affected, whether or not they asked for redress. Depending on the boat's scores in the qualification races, calculating the average on just two races might be unfair to the other boats, as it almost certainly excludes the chances of any other boat winning the event. Other options available to the protest committee would be to include races Q1 to Q5 when calculating the average score, to take into account the competitive differences between the qualifying and the final series, or to give redress only in race F3.

Q&A 2020.009

retained

Rule 18.4 at the finishing line

Situation

The finishing line is between two marks. Boats are finishing downwind.

Question

Does rule 18.4 apply to an inside overlapped right-of-way boat approaching the finishing line?

Answer

Yes.

Rule 18.4 will apply provided that the inside overlapped right-of-way boat must gybe to sail her proper course. A finishing line is not a gate; a string representing the boat's track, when drawn taut, is not required to pass between the marks of a finishing line. See definition Finish and rule 28.1

Q&A 2020.010

retained

COVID 19 regulations at events

Question

How shall COVID-19 government regulations, protocols and guidance be implemented in race documents?

Answer

It is not recommended to include legislation, protocols or guidance from external authorities in an event's rules, as breaches of such legislation are outside the jurisdiction of event officials and are subject to changes at short notice.

Most events will need to produce or adopt protocols to ensure compliance with government COVID-19 regulations and guidance.

Instructions or requests by an event official based on published guidance, protocols or legislation in effect at a venue at any time are likely to be reasonable. Failure by a competitor or support person to comply with a reasonable request or instruction may be misconduct and may be reported to the protest committee under rule 69.

It is recommended that:

1. Any specific guidance or protocols that govern the event are published on the official notice board in English or in a language that it is reasonable to be understood by all boats affected.
2. Events consider the appointment of an event medical officer to be able to assess any symptomatic issues and act in accordance with the event protocols.
3. The following sailing instructions are added:
 - *[DP] Competitors and support persons shall comply with any reasonable request from an event official. Failure to comply may be misconduct.*
 - *Reasonable actions by event officials to implement COVID-19 guidance, protocols or legislation, even if they later prove to have been unnecessary, are not improper actions or omissions.*

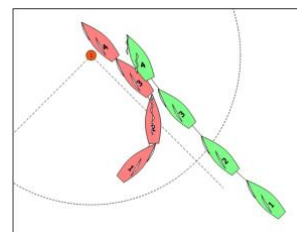
Q&A 2020.014

retained

Interpretation of 'shall not cause' in rule 18.3

Situation 1

Red completes her tack slightly to leeward and on the limit of being overlapped with Green. Green's only option is to sail above close hauled to avoid contact with Red



Question

Did Red break rule 18.3?

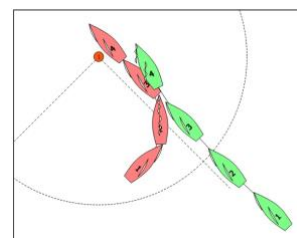
Answer

Yes.

Red caused Green to sail above close-hauled to avoid contact. All other requirements of rule 18.3 were met.

Situation 2

Red completes her tack a quarter of a boat length ahead of Green. Green could have sailed either to windward or to leeward of Red. If Green had sailed to leeward of Red, she would not be able to pass the mark on the required side. Green sailed to windward of Red and sailed above close-hauled to avoid contact with Red



Question

Did Red break rule 18.3?

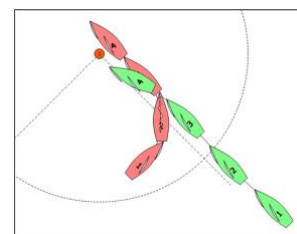
Answer

Yes.

See answer 1.

Situation 3

Red completes her tack a quarter of a boat length ahead of Green. Green could have sailed either to windward or to leeward of Red. Green sailed to leeward of Red. Red does not give Green mark-room. Green passes the mark on the wrong side.



Question

Did Red break rule 18.3?

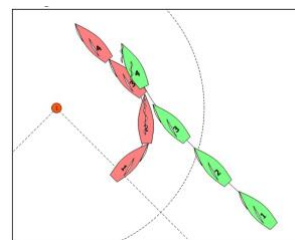
Answer

Yes.

After passing head to wind from port to starboard tack inside the zone, Red did not give mark-room to Green who was overlapped inside her.

Situation 4

Red completes her tack a quarter of a boat length ahead of Green. Green could have sailed either to windward or to leeward of Red. If Green had sailed to leeward of Red, she would clearly be able to pass the mark on the required side. Green sailed to windward of Red and sailed above close-hauled to avoid contact with Red



Question

Did Red break rule 18.3?

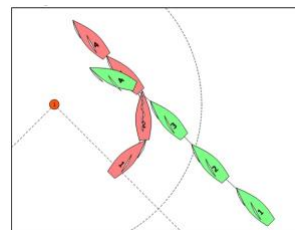
Answer

Yes.

Green may choose between the two options available to her, and there is no rule that binds Green into one of the two options.

Situation 5

Red completes her tack a quarter of a boat length ahead of Green. Green could have sailed either to windward or to leeward of Red. Green sailed to leeward of Red. Red gives Green mark-room.



Question

Did Red break rule 18.3?

Answer

No.

Red complied with the requirements of rule 18.3.

NOTE

Rule 18.3 does not only apply when luffing above close hauled is the only viable solution.

The word 'cause' in the rule refers to a cause-effect relation between the actions of the port-tacker and the boat sailing on starboard. In the situations above, when the action of Green is a result of Red's actions, the 'cause' clause of rule 18.3 is satisfied, even if there was another way to avoid the boat that tacked.

Q&A 2020.015

retained

Damage while not racing

Situation

A boat is sailing in the starting line area before her warning signal. No government rules apply to the racing area. The sailing instructions state that the starting line will be between a mark at the port end and a race committee vessel at the starboard end. The boat hits the anchored race committee vessel, causing serious damage to both. The race committee protests the boat.

Question 1

Which rules apply?

Answer 1

The race committee vessel is a mark but, as the boat is not racing, rule 31, Touching a Mark does not apply. The boat is sailing in or near the racing area and intends to race while the race committee vessel is not sailing under the Racing Rules of Sailing, therefore, according to the Part 2 preamble, the boat shall comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (IRPCAS) with respect to the race committee vessel.

There are several IRPCAS rules that apply in this situation:

IRPCAS rule 2(a) which refers to 'the ordinary practice of seamen' as a general requirement to act sensibly, overlays the detailed requirements of the IRPCAS. That would seem to include avoiding an anchored vessel.

IRPCAS rule 5 specifically requires a vessel to maintain a proper look-out and IRPCAS rule 6 requires a vessel to proceed at a safe speed so that she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision.

Question 2

Provided that the protest is valid, if the boat is found to have broken an IRPCAS rule, may the protest committee penalize her under rule 64.2?

Answer 2

Yes.

By breaking an IRPCAS rule when meeting a vessel that was not sailing under the rules of Part 2, the boat did not comply with the preamble to Part 2. Since the boat was not racing at the time of the incident and provided that no other penalty applies, the protest committee shall disqualify her from the race sailed nearest in time to that of the incident.

Q&A 2020.020

retained

Clarification of the term 'fetching' in rule 18.3

Situation

At a windward mark to be left to port, boat A entered the zone on starboard tack while boat B passed head to wind in the zone and completed her tack to starboard, below her layline and overlapped to leeward of boat A. In order to round the mark, she luffed, touching the mark and causing boat A to sail above close-hauled to avoid contact.

Question 1

Was boat B fetching the mark when she tacked to starboard?

Answer 1

Yes.

A boat is fetching the mark if she is able to pass to windward of the mark and leave it on the required side without changing tack. Boat B was able to pass the mark without changing tack; the fact that she touched it is not relevant. See definition 'Fetching'.

Question 2

Would the answer be different if boat B additionally broke rule 42 in order to round the mark?

Answer 2

No.

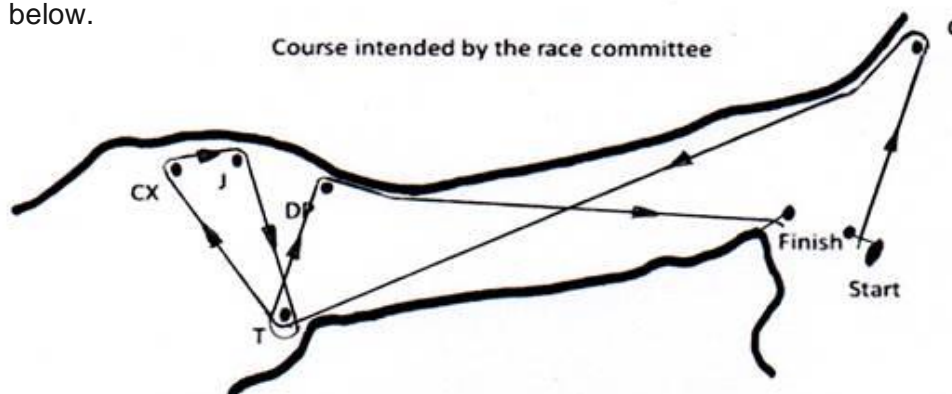
The definition 'Fetching' does not have exceptions.

Q&A 2020.021

retained

Description of marks and sailing the courseSituation

The race committee communicates orally, under rule 90.2(c), that the course will be: start, mark C to port, mark T to starboard, mark CX to starboard, mark J to starboard, mark T to starboard, mark DP to starboard, finish. The intention of the race committee is that the boats sail the course shown in the drawing below.

Question 1

Is mark T a rounding mark?

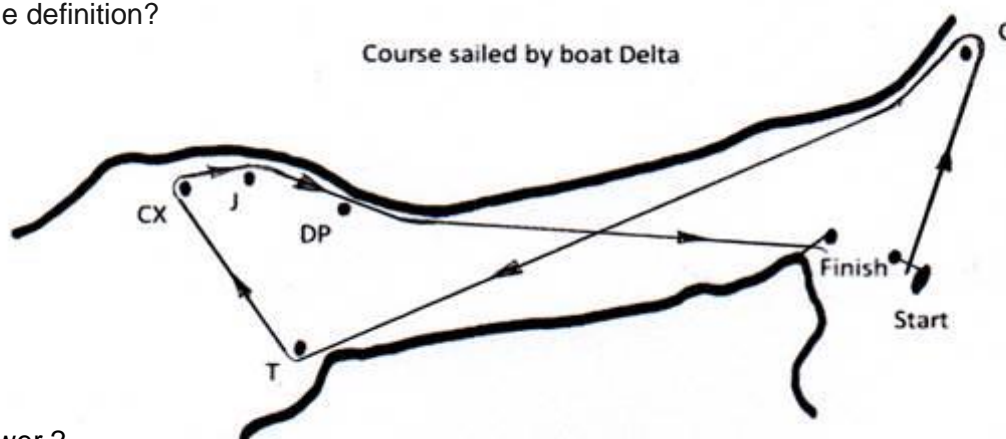
Answer 1

No.

Rule J2.1(4) requires the race committee to identify all rounding marks in relation to the definition Sail the Course. Mark T is not identified as a rounding mark.

Question 2

One of the boats sailed the course shown in the drawing below. Did she sail the course according to the definition?

Answer 2

Yes.

For the purposes of the definition Sail the Course, the string representing a boat's track passes each mark on the required side and in the correct order.

Q&A 2021.001

Published: 2 November 2020

Clarification regarding hearsay evidence

Situation

Rule 63.6(a) requires the protest committee to take the evidence presented, including hearsay evidence, of the parties present at the hearing and of their witnesses.

Rule 63.6(c) gives the parties present the right to question any person giving evidence.

Rule M3.2 dot 9 states that the protest committee 'accept written evidence from a witness who is not available to be questioned only if all parties agree. In doing so they forego their rights to question that witness.'

Question

Is there a conflict between those rules?

Answer

No.

Written evidence may be presented; the parties present and the protest committee may question the party presenting the evidence as permitted by rule 63.6(c) and may call other witnesses to help resolve any disputed evidence. If the parties agree with the evidence, it shall be accepted by the protest committee as undisputed. If the parties disagree, the protest committee shall take into consideration any dispute between the parties when it decides the weight of the evidence presented.

NOTE

Appendix M describes protest committee procedures and is advisory only.

Q&A 2021.002

Published: 4 January 2021

Meaning of 'hull' in the Racing Rules of Sailing

Situation

The term 'hull' is mentioned in several places in the Racing Rules of Sailing.

Question 1

What is the applicable definition of 'hull'?

Answer 1

The term 'hull' is not defined in the Racing Rules of Sailing, therefore, under the introduction/terminology which prescribes that other words are used in the sense ordinarily understood in the nautical or general use, the definition in The Equipment Rules of Sailing for 2021-2024 is appropriate:

D.1.1 Hull

The hull shell including any transom, the deck including any superstructure, the internal structure including any cockpit, the fittings associated with these parts and any corrector weights.

Question 2

Are bowsprits, fixed or retractable, part of the hull?

Answer 2

No. See answer 1.

The Equipment Rules of Sailing rule F.1.4(c)(i), defines bowsprits as hull spars. The Equipment Rules of Sailing rule F.1.4(c), defines hull spars as spars attached to the hull. The Equipment Rules of Sailing definition of hull excludes hull spars, therefore bowsprits, whether fixed or retractable, are not part of the hull.

Question 3

Are the wings of a skiff, fixed or retractable, part of the hull?

Answer 3

Yes.

Neither the Equipment Rules of Sailing nor the Racing Rules of Sailing define whether or not the wings of a skiff are part of a boat's hull. Unless the class rules define wings otherwise, the wings are considered to be an extension of the deck and therefore part of a boat's hull.