Racing Rules of Sailing

Definition - Room

A submission from US SAILING

Proposal

Room  The space a boat needs in the existing conditions, including space to comply with her obligations under the rules of Part 2 and rule 31, while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanlike way.

Current Position

As above.

Reason

When several boats come together it is common that a ‘middle’ boat is simultaneously entitled to room from one boat and required to give room to or keep clear of another. The proposal provides a clear answer to the question of whether the boat required to give room to such a ‘middle’ boat has to allow for that boat's obligations to other boats. Under the current rules this is not clear; in a separate submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee a new case is proposed to clarify this issue. If accepted, the case will handle the question until the revised rulebook takes effect on 1/1/2013. However, it would be better for such an important matter to be covered in the rules rather than in a case.

For example, consider three boats at a downwind mark. A, B and C are overlapped and on the same tack when the first of them reaches the zone. A is on the outside, C is on the inside and B is between them. It is important that A gives enough room to B that B can give mark-room to C.

Similarly, consider three boats L, M and W, overlapped and on the same tack with L to leeward, W to windward and M between them. L has no proper course restriction and she luffs. The rules should be explicit that L’s obligation to M under rule 16.1, to give M room to keep clear, should also include allowing for M's obligation under rule 16.1 to give W room to keep clear.

The proposed addition to the definition of Room makes it clear that a boat required to give room has not complied with the rules if she compels another boat to break a rule of Part 2.

The proposal also provides that room include the space needed to avoid touching a mark. This too is covered in the proposed new case from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee, which states that it is unseamanlike to touch a mark. As pointed out above, it is better to make such an important concept explicit in the rules themselves.