



Request to World Sailing from the IRC Technical Committee: RRS/ERS Interpretations Whisker Poles / Leeward Struts

The use of poles set to leeward to act as struts for the sheeting of headsails is becoming more common. The pole is not attached to the clew of the headsail; the sheet is running through the end of a ferrule along the length of the pole.



Example of a pole set to leeward for sheeting a headsail.

The current situation on the legality of this configuration can be summarised by:

IRC Rules do not govern or limit the use of a pole set to leeward to sheet headsails. The use of these poles is governed by the Racing Rules of Sailing RRS 50.3. IRC Rule 21.3.2 states that "All sails shall be set and sheeted in accordance with RRS 50".

The IRC Rating Authority is not in a position to issue an interpretation on the Racing Rule of Sailing and the use of these poles. An interpretation would only be given by World Sailing or an Event Jury following a protest for that event.

In reviewing the Racing Rule 50 on whisker poles it is important not to forget that they are also used by less competitive racers who use them to pole a headsail out to windward.



Example of a common configuration for a pole set to windward for sheeting a headsail.

Whisker Poles Interpretation

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There are conflicting definitions between the definitions in the ERS & RRS.

ERS: Definitions F.1.4 (d)(ii)

WHISKER POLE

A **spar** attached to the mast **spar** and a **headsail clew**.

RRS: 50.2

Spinnaker Poles; Whisker Poles

Only one spinnaker pole or whisker pole shall be used at a time except when gybing. When in use, it shall be attached to the foremost mast.

RRS: 50.3 (c)

Use of Outriggers

A headsail may be sheeted or attached at its clew to a spinnaker pole or whisker pole, provided that a spinnaker is not set.

It is using the RRS definition and operation criteria as an outrigger (RRS 50.3(a)) that these poles are deemed to be within the rules. Using the following criteria:

- The pole is a whisker pole and attached to the foremost mast.
- The headsail is sheeted to the pole (There is no definition of "sheeted" but as these poles are not attached to the clew of the headsail; the sheet is running through the end of a ferrule along the length of the pole).

Based on the lack of clarity provided by the Racing Rules & ERS it is proposed to seek an interpretation to RRS 50.3 and the ERS definition of Whisker Pole from World Sailing to establish if a pole set to leeward to sheet a headsail is permitted.

We look forward to receiving the interpretation from World Sailing in a timely manner as any interpretation from World Sailing may affect the IRC rules and thus proposals to the IRC Congress shall be made in advance.