Situation

Questions to clear up existing confusion about the meaning of the word ‘cause’ in rule 18.3. In the three examples below - (a), (b) and (c) -, Blue has passed head to wind inside the zone of a mark to be left to port, and will thereafter fetch the mark. Yellow is fetching the mark on starboard.

Example (a)
Blue completes her tack clear ahead and marginally to wind of Yellow’s course, while leaving enough space between herself and the mark for Yellow to pass on the inside. Yellow may avoid Blue by bearing away or luffing. Yellow starts bearing away, but then luffs and passes Blue to windward. In passing to windward, Yellow must sail above close-hauled.

Example (b)
Blue completes her tack a boat length to leeward of Yellow. Yellow bears away and aims at Blue. When Yellow reaches Blue, she luffs above close-hauled to avoid contact.
Example (c)
Blue completes her tack clear ahead and directly in front of Yellow, while leaving room for Yellow to pass between her and the mark. Yellow, who is moving faster than Blue, must either bear away or luff to avoid Blue. Yellow chooses to luff.

Question
In which of the three examples above does Blue break rule 18.3 by causing Yellow to sail above close-hauled?

Answer
Blue breaks rule 18.3 in situations (a) and (c).

In Example (a) After Blue has completed her tack, Yellow will need to take avoiding action. She may either luff and sail above close-hauled to pass to windward, or bear away and pass inside. No rule says how she must do this, she has the right to take either option. When Yellow chooses to luff, even though she initially bore away slightly, the subsequent luff above close-hauled is caused by Blue, which breaks rule 18.3.

In Example (b), Yellow is behind and about a boat length to windward of Blue when Blue passes head to wind. If Yellow could have rounded the mark without taking avoiding action if she had held her course, then Blue does not break rule 18.3. Although Yellow is not required to hold her course, by bearing away hard, Yellow's need to take avoiding action has been caused by her own action and not by Blue, therefore Blue does not break rule 18.3.

In Example (c), Yellow must change course to keep clear and avoid contact with Blue after Blue has passed head to wind in the zone and completed her tack clear ahead of Yellow. No rule says how she must do this, she has the right to take either option. When Yellow chooses to pass to windward and sails above clause-hauled in doing so, this is caused by Blue, which breaks rule 18.3.