

# Duke City Model Yacht Club Guide to Getting Started in Racing

## Introduction

Welcome to the Duke City Model Yacht Club. Our primary activity is racing two classes of boats, the Soling One Meter and the RG65. Both classes use the same rules as the “big boats,” called the Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS) which includes an Appendix that adjusts the rules for radio control sailing.

The purpose of this document is not to make you an expert on the rules or to teach you how to exploit the rules to your advantage in a race; rather, it is teach you enough to enable you to stay out of trouble. The rest is up to you.

## Basics

### Interpreting The Rules

The RRS exists in a structure much like that of the legal system. There are written laws (the rules) and there is also a body of interpretation that has arisen from the decisions of judges and the outcomes of protest hearings. As with the legal system, this latter body of knowledge is dispersed among various sources. For this document we have used one of the standard handbooks, a PowerPoint presentation by a racing judge, and an official document issued as a guide to racing judges. Also, as with the legal system, interpretations may vary from time to time and place to place; the purpose of this document is introduce you to the way we interpret them in our club, with the caveat that details and attitudes may differ in other venues.

*Willis, Bryan, The Rules in Practice 2002-2012; Lewis, Trevor, Guide to the New Racing Rules; ISAF: Call Book for Match Racing (General Rules Section).*

## The Corinthian Spirit

*Terms with specialized meanings are italicized.*

*Technically, a tack and a gybe, but until you've raced some a simple loop will do. If you are going upwind, starting your turn by bearing away from will make it quicker.*

*RRS Rule 2, "Fair Sailing"*

*Hence the saying, "In fleet racing the rules are your shield and in match racing the rules are your sword."*

There are three forms of yacht racing: *fleet racing*, which is what we do, *match racing*, such as the America's Cup, and *team racing*. Fleet racing is distinctive because, in contrast to the other two forms, it operates without referees. A fleet race is at once a competitive and a cooperative venture: competitive, because everybody wants to do their best, and cooperative, because we all rely on each other to obey the rules and voluntarily take a 360 degree *penalty turn* when we realize (or are reminded) that we've broken one. This voluntary aspect is called the "Corinthian Spirit," after an early yacht club, and is best expressed by the statement that you sail by the rules even when no one is looking. The great sailor Paul Elvstrom said it best: "You haven't won the race, if in winning the race you have lost the respect of your competitors."

The Corinthian Spirit is especially important to our club because we sail in a city park, observed by large numbers of the general public. We represent not only ourselves but also model yachting as a whole. Our survival and growth as a club depends on attracting new members, most of whom will have first encountered us by watching us race.

The core of the Corinthian Spirit is embodied in the RRS, and this rule is strictly enforced in our events.

## The Purpose of the Rules

In our races, the rules exist to prevent collisions. In Match and Team Racing they are also used to force competitors into disadvantageous situations, which is one reason why these forms of racing are refereed. On our pond, whose winds are shifty in both direction and strength, engaging in aggressive tactical trickery not only could cause you to lose the respect of your competitors, but also isn't profitable in the long run. Our most successful skippers are those who concentrate on sailing an optimum course in the cleanest air — which means they avoid unnecessary maneuvering.

## Hailing

As radio control racers we have one advantage over the "big boats" in that we call out to, or *hail*, each other more easily. A proper hail includes the sail number of the boat being hailed, is made early enough for the hailed boat to react, and is polite.

# How We Compete

## Heats, Races, and Awards

A day's race consists of a series of *heats*, each of which involves one, or possibly more circuits of a *course* defined by floating buoys called *marks*. Each race is conducted by a Race Director (RD) who manages the event, judges starts and finishes, and has the right to disqualify a skipper for a violation of sportsmanship and fair sailing—something that has never happened in our club, and one of the purposes of this document is to keep it that way.

*RRS Rule 2*

Heats are scored by assigning points to finishers: one for first, two for second, and so forth. Low score wins the race. Except for special events, we do not award trophies for a day's race; rather, the scores are aggregated over an entire year and trophies are awarded at our annual dinner. As a consequence, gaining or losing a single place in a single heat is not very important and you can afford to be generous to your fellow skippers if and when an incident occurs.

## Before The Race

You should arrive with ample time to get your boat set up and checked out on the water. Immediately before the day's racing the RD will hold a skipper's meeting. At this meeting the RD will explain the course, define the *control area*, state whether or not *dip starts* are allowed, and indicate which, if any, marks may be touched on the proper side without penalty.

*RRS Rule E3.3. A control area is a restricted space where the skippers stand when controlling their boats. It is up to the RD to decide whether the area is limited to a restricted space or consists of the whole pond. We typically impose a restricted control area when our pond walkway is crowded with visitors to the park. Also, remember that we have no special rights to the pond, and member of the public can run a model at any time during our races.*

Our courses commonly involve rounding marks in a counterclockwise direction. This is referred to as *port side rounding* or *leave marks to port*; the entity being to port being the mark. This choice means that the final approach to the mark will be made on starboard tack, which simplifies establishing who has right of way. Going the other way round (*starboard side rounding* or *leave mark to starboard*) leads to complicated right of way situations at the mark.

A skipper is allowed to request one five-minute delay, or "hold" between heats during each day's event. Holds are to be used for repairing damage or changing batteries. It is not permitted to make adjustments, or in the case of RG65s, change your rig during a hold.

A control area is a restricted space where the skippers stand when controlling their boats. It is up to the RD to decide whether the area is limited to a restricted space or consists of the whole pond.

If the course is unclear to you, or the RD has omitted one of the above rules of the day, you should not hesitate to ask for clarification.

### **At the Break**

After an hour or so of racing, the RD will call for a fifteen to twenty minute break. This is when RG 65 skippers will have time to change rigs, if they so choose. Racing will then continue for another hour to hour and a half.

### **After the Race**

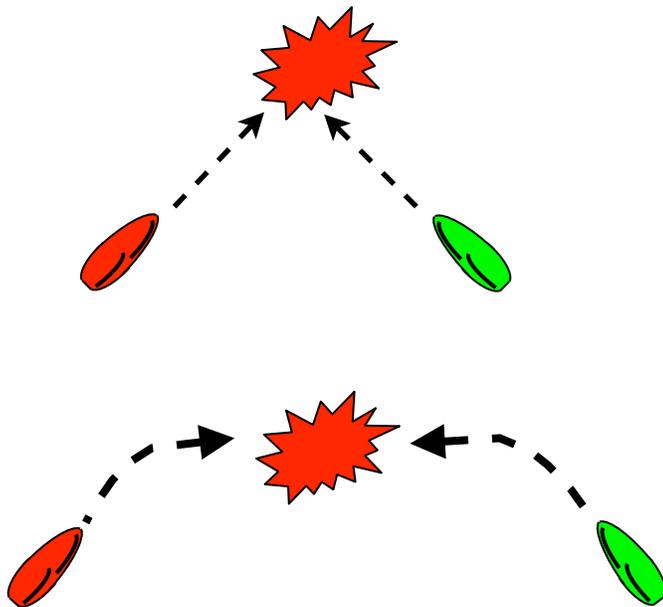
At the end of racing it's nice to help the RD by pulling in the marks and if you're the last person to leave, to check around for any articles that somebody might have left by mistake.

### **Next Section**

In the next section we'll introduce you to the fundamental rules which apply whenever two boats meet.

## The Fundamental Rules

To understand the fundamental mechanism of the rules, you have to put yourself in the position of the helmsman of a full-size racing boat on a collision course with a second boat. The question before you is: do you dodge or keep going? You and the other helmsman must make this decision quickly and unambiguously. If you both keep going you will collide. If you both try to dodge, and do so "in synch," you may also collide. What is required are rules which permit each of you to independently decide (since there is neither the time nor the means for the two of you to chat about it) which of you must dodge and which of you may keep



*If both boats do the same thing, there's a problem. Somehow, both skippers must decide without communication.*

going.

The boat that must dodge is called the *burdened* boat, the *give-way* boat, or the *keep-clear* boat. The boat that may keep going (in a predictable way) is called the *stand on*, or *right-of-way* (ROW) boat.

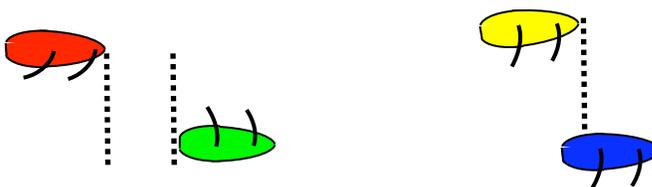
After years of collisions, protests, and committee meetings the rules became based on two factors that could be seen from both boats and used to govern independent, but coordinated, decision making. The first is the position of the boats relative to each other; the second is the *tack* each boat is on, **as shown by the position of her main boom.**

*Technically, it's defined by the direction of the wind at the boat, but the boom is what we can see from pondside.*

### Definition: Overlap and Clear Ahead

With regard to relative position, boats are either *overlapped* or one boat is *clear ahead* of the other.

Green is clear ahead of Red;  
Yellow is overlapped with  
Blue.

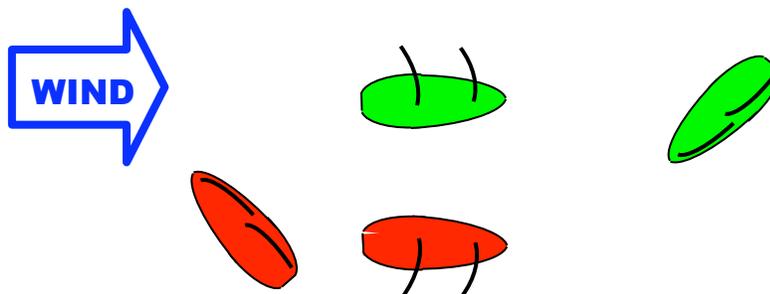


For the classes we race, overlap exists when the stem of the boat that is astern is ahead of the transom of the boat that is ahead. Overlap can be very difficult to determine in radio sailing, owing to distances, sight angles, and the possibility of vision being blocked by other boats. **If you have any doubt, hail the other boat; if they disagree, assume no overlap exists.**

### Definition: Port and Starboard Tack

With regard to tack, a boat is either on *port tack* or *starboard tack*:

Both red boats are on port tack; both green boats are on starboard tack. The origin of this admittedly confusing terminology is given in Appendix B.



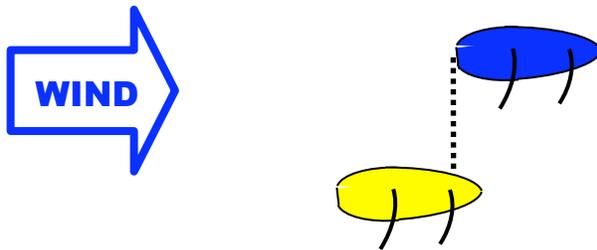
A boat is on port tack when her main boom is angled to the starboard (right) of her centerline; she is on starboard tack when her main boom is angled to the left (port) side of her centerline, whether she's going up, across, or down wind. That's right, just the opposite of what you might guess.

### Definition: Windward and Leeward

Finally, tack and relative position combine to form the definition of *windward* and *leeward*:

The RRS definitions of windward and leeward are only relevant when two boats are **overlapped** and **on the same tack**. When this is the case, the boat whose main boom points toward the other

boat is the windward boat. The boat which is not the windward boat is the leeward boat. As with port and starboard tacks, **it is the position of the booms and not any relation to actual wind** that governs:

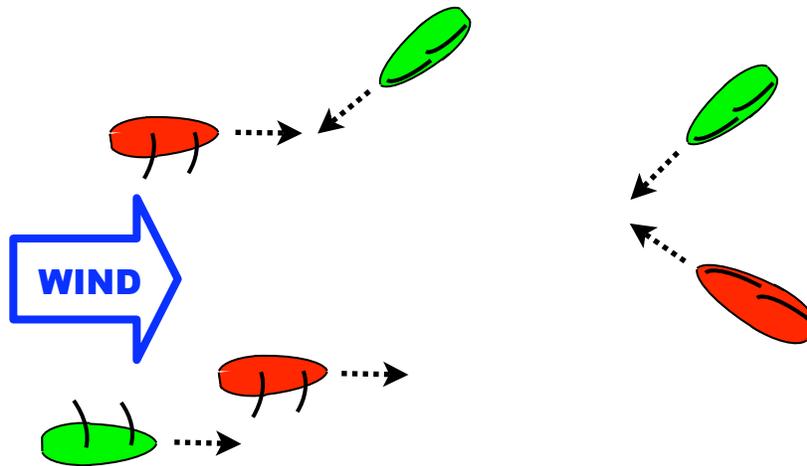


*Blue is overlapped and by rule to windward of Yellow, even though she is farther from the actual wind.*

### Rule: Port Tack Gives Way

With these definitions under our belts we can introduce the first and most basic of the rules dealing with right of way: **When two boats are on different tacks, the boat on starboard tack has the right of way.**

*RRS Rule 10*



*In each of these encounters, it is the red boat which must give way.*

That's it: upwind, downwind, ahead, behind, whatever: if two boats are converging with their booms on the opposite side, the one whose boom is on her left side has right of way. There are a small number of exceptions when dealing with marks and obstructions, but **as a beginner you should take the rule as absolute**. "Starboard" is the most common hail you'll hear; it means "I've got the right of way and I intend to exercise it." It is difficult at first to immediately recognize what tack you are on, especially when your boat is headed straight toward you, and it is useful to remind yourself by muttering "I'm on port" or "I'm on starboard" under your breath if you're in amongst a group of boats.

*RRS Rule 16.2*

A common occurrence when two boats going to windward meet on opposite tacks (such as the right hand encounter in the diagram above) is that the port tack boat bears away from the wind and “ducks” behind the starboard tack boat. When this occurs, even though the starboard tack boat has right of way she is not permitted to interfere with the other boat’s maneuver to keep clear. So to keep out of trouble here, **be aware of what tack you are on, if on port keep clear, and if on starboard don’t block someone ducking behind you.**

### Rules: Windward and Clear Behind Give Way

The next two rules only come into effect when two boats are on the *same* tack. If the boats are overlapped, the windward boat must keep clear. If they are not, the boat that is clear behind must keep clear.

RRS Rules 11 and 12

*In both these encounters, Blue must keep clear. To the right, there is overlap and Blue is the windward boat; to the left, there is no overlap and Yellow is clear ahead.*



These two rules have important implications when you come up and pass another boat. Keeping clear while you’re still behind is obvious. If you swing around to windward you have no rights and the other boat can exercise her right of way to make you sail where you don’t want to go. “Aha,” you may think, “if I pass to leeward then I have the right of way and I’ll do the pushing.” Well, that depends. If you *come up from clear astern* as in the diagram above and are *passing to leeward closer than two boat lengths* you are obligated to sail your *proper course*, which is defined as the course you would be sailing if the other boat wasn’t there. In other words, no funny stuff, although it is admittedly difficult to determine whether a boat is sailing proper course owing to sight angles, depth perception, and so forth. **The best way to stay out of trouble when passing from astern is to go to leeward and then sail as directly as possible to the next mark**, at least until you are safely ahead of the other boat.

RRS Rule 17

The 2009 rules removed a restriction on what a boat that is clear ahead may do to prevent being passed. The new freedom of maneuver is *not* absolute — you still must give other boats time to react to what you are doing. **If you are being passed, the best course of action until you gain experience is to let the other boat by, then search for cleaner air.**

The examples above are mere snapshots of what in a real race is a very fluid environment, in which boats are constantly gaining and losing right of way as they tack or otherwise maneuver. There is a set of rules that cover these circumstances.

### Rules: Gaining and Exercising Right of Way

First, having right of way is no excuse for hitting somebody. Actually, the rule is somewhat toothless in that it says a right of way boat only is penalized if the other boat is damaged. Banging into people is no way to make friends, and if it looks like it's a deliberate tactic of intimidation it may make you liable for a Rule 2 disqualification. **If you think someone is ignoring your right of way, take evasive action and hail "Protest" followed by the boat's sail number.** Protests are discussed in Appendix B.

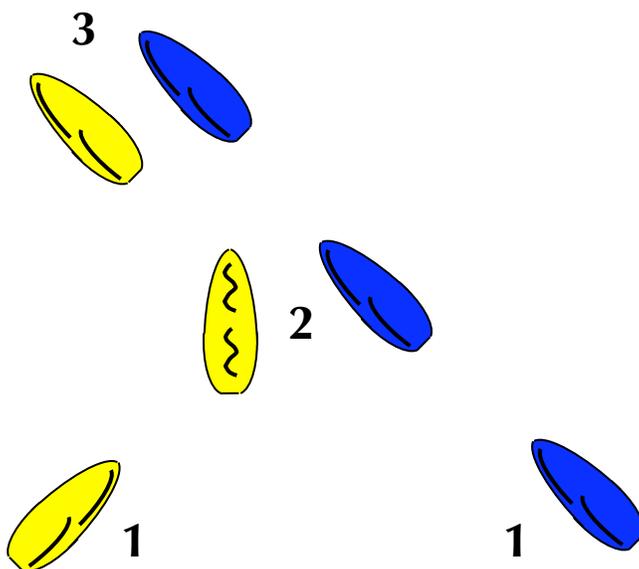
*RRS Rule 14*

Second, having or gaining right of way is no excuse for making it impossible for someone else to avoid hitting you. You must make it possible for them to get out of the way, and the best tool for that is an early hail. One of the most common, and annoying infractions, is to have someone interfere with you while maneuvering into a right of way position and then claim innocence on grounds that they have the right of way. You are not clear of potential foul until *after* the other boat has had an opportunity to keep clear.

*RRS Rules 15 and 16.1*

Third, when you're tacking you give up any rights you may have from the time your boat passes head to wind until the time you're close-hauled on your new tack.

*RRS Rule 13*



*At position 1, Blue has right of way by port/starboard tack. At 2, Blue still has right of way while Yellow has passed head to wind in her tack. At 3 Yellow is back on a close-hauled course and has right of way by virtue of being the leeward boat. Between 2 and 3, Yellow must give Blue room to keep clear, and after 3 Yellow must sail her proper course.*

Right of way means other boats have to keep clear while you're sailing along; it doesn't mean they have to give you room to perform a tack. **So to avoid trouble with these rules, hail when you're changing course to exercise or gain right of way and get clear before trying to tack.**

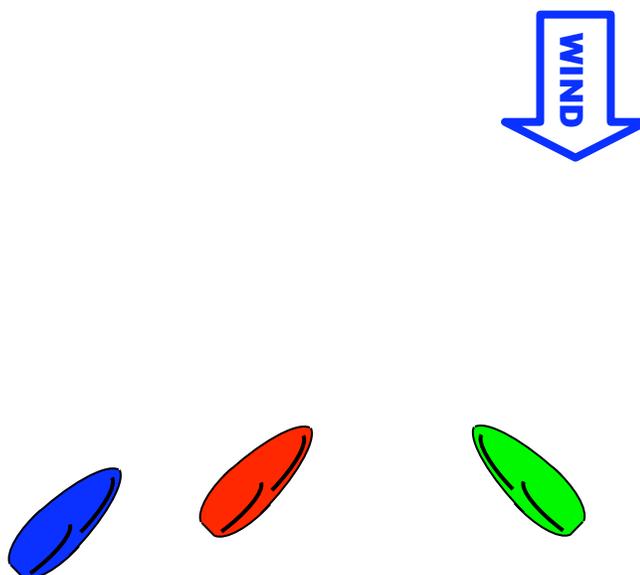
### Obstructions

An *obstruction* is something you have to sail around or avoid: geese, floating tumbleweed, or, more commonly, a boat that has right of way. The rules also differentiate between an obstruction and a *continuing obstruction*. A mark is *never* an obstruction, and the only continuing obstruction on our pond is the shoreline. Because of the way the sides of our pond slope, the shoreline poses a danger of grounding or keel damage at a distance from the water's edge, and this should be taken into account when deciding if you or another boat need room.

### Going to Windward

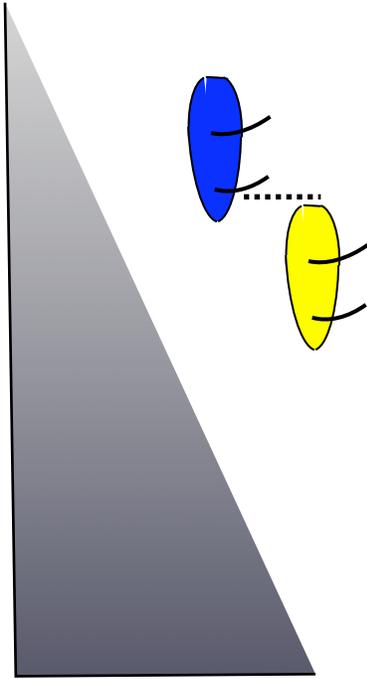
The rules for going to windward are different than for other points of sail. Going to windward, there is a "hail and respond" protocol to be followed:

*Red must avoid Green by RRS 10. Red can choose to duck behind Green or tack. To tack, Red must get room from Blue. Red hails "Room to Tack, Please" Blue now either tacks immediately, or hails back "You tack" and gives Red room to do so. Red may not hail for room if she can duck behind Green with a minor course change. Further, Red is exonerated if she breaks any right of way rule except the duty to avoid collision while she is tacking. (RRS Rule 20)*



## Sailing Close to Shore

In the case of the shoreline, a boat is entitled to room only if she is overlapped with the other boat and the other boat is able to give room from the time the overlap began:



*Blue is the windward boat, and therefore must keep clear — but she has obtained overlap with Yellow, and therefore Yellow must give Blue room to sail between her and the shore (RRS 19.2(c)). Remember, if there is any doubt whatever that overlap exists, it doesn't, so this is a very dangerous situation for Blue.*

To avoid trouble with obstructions, **tack or give room when somebody hails for room to tack. Don't hail for room unless you are sure you need it. Don't try to slip in between a boat and the shore, and don't try to squeeze another boat into the shore.**

## The Next Section

Next we'll walk through a typical heat from start to finish, and show how these rules, with some modifications and exceptions, are applied in practice.



## Around The Course

### Starting

Starting is controlled by an audible *start sequence*. The first signal is “Boats to the water,” at which time your boat should be in or on its way to the pond, ready to race. There will be a warning signal, “Two minutes to mark” and then the important signal “One minute to mark,” which is also known as the *preparatory signal*. Between the two minute warning signal and the preparatory signal, you are sailing as you please (technically, under the commercial rules of the road) and your duty is to avoid collision. You may bring your boat to shore, make adjustments, and relaunch. After the preparatory signal, two things are different: you are now sailing under the racing rules, and if you are adjusting or working on your boat you must hold it at the side of the pond until you hear the start signal.

*RRS Rule E4.5*

To start properly, you must cross the start line between the starting marks, after the start signal, and without touching one of the marks. The start line connects the *course* edges of the marks. If you are over early or outside the line you must sail clear of the other boats and then sail around the *end* of the start line and restart. If you commit a foul after the preparatory signal, or touch a start mark, you must take a penalty turn as soon as possible and in any case before rounding the first mark of the course. The Race Director must be afforded a clear view of the start line, so be careful where you stand.

### “I” Flag

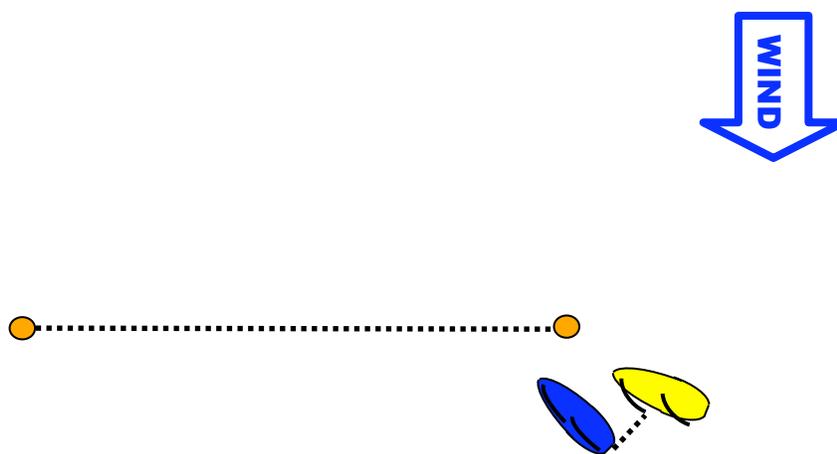
Our standard sailing instructions specify that the “I Flag” rule is in effect for all our races. If you cross the start line at any time between the preparatory and start signals, you must *immediately* sail around one of the ends of the start line and back to the pre-start side.

*RRS Rule 30.1.*

### Barging

Between the preparatory signal (one minute) and the start signal, there is no notion of proper course, and a start mark is not an obstacle. This means that a leeward boat may exercise her right of way under RRS Rule 11 without restriction. And this, in turn, has an important implication during the time between the preparatory signal and start:

*Yellow is trying to force herself between Blue and the starboard start mark. Both boats are on the same tack and overlapped, so Blue has right of way by RRS Rule 11. Blue can sail as close to the mark as she pleases, even to the point of forcing Yellow into or on the wrong side of the mark. If Blue has to change course, even slightly, to avoid a collision with Yellow, then Yellow has committed a foul.*



Attempting to force your way in between a start mark and a boat to leeward is called “barging”. It is sometimes attempted by experienced and overly aggressive skippers who think they can intimidate a novice into giving them room without protesting. If you are Yellow and forcefully hail for room at this point you might find yourself being warned by the RD and if you make a habit of it you may be disqualified for a Rule 2 violation. And, of course, you can be placed in the position of Yellow above without intending to barge. Although barging most commonly occurs near the starboard side start mark, the rules are applied the same way on the port end of the line.

### Sailing The Course

The course is defined by *marks*, those colored balls floating in the middle of the pond.

*RRS Rule 31, as modified.*

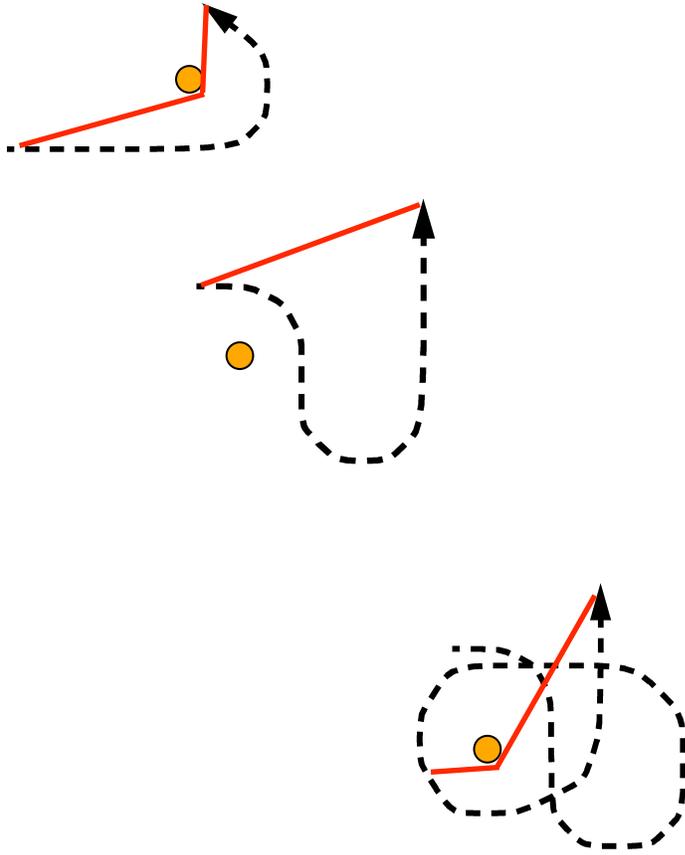
*This modification to Rule 31 may not exist at other clubs or events; in those venues, only a protest hearing can exonerate you.*

The first thing to know about marks is that it is a foul to touch one, even just by brushing it with a boom or a sail. The DCMYC Standard Sailing Instructions exonerate you if you touch a mark as a result of a *second* boat committing a foul, such as not giving you room to which you are entitled. If you were in the wrong, that is, were not entitled to the room, a single penalty turn will clear both the foul of being where you shouldn’t have been *and* hitting the mark. **If the choice is between a collision and touching a mark, touch the mark and either take your turn or claim exoneration on the spot by protesting the boat that forced you into the mark.**

*RRS Rule 28.1*

The second thing to know about marks is they must be rounded in the direction defined by the official course. If you miss a mark by turning short of it, you must circle back and go around it. If you

get confused and round a mark in the wrong direction, you must “unwind the string.”



The top diagram shows an official course around a mark, and how the red “string” wraps when sailed properly. The middle diagram shows a boat that has started to round that mark in the wrong direction, then turns back. Note that her red “string” does not “wrap” properly around the mark and this rounding is therefore incorrect. The bottom diagram shows the proper way to correct for wrong-way roundings. By making a “figure 8” with the mark in the center of the second loop the red “string” gets put on the proper side of the mark and “wraps” as it should as the rounding is completed.

This refers to the “string rule” of the RRS, which says that your track around the course, if it were a string and pulled taut, should wrap around all marks on the proper side. As the pictures show, it’s not enough just to turn around and go in the right direction — you have to “unwind” and re-approach the mark on the proper side to get your “string” to wind properly around the mark. If you find this confusing, a few moments with a pin and a bit of string will help clear it up.

### **Rounding Marks**

Writing in 1923 and looking back at fifty years of racing, a British author said, “We believe that in the old days of yacht racing there were more protests over rounding marks than under any other rule.” He then asserted that a recent change to the rules would fix things. Not a lot has changed. People are still tinkering with the rules and fouls are still common.

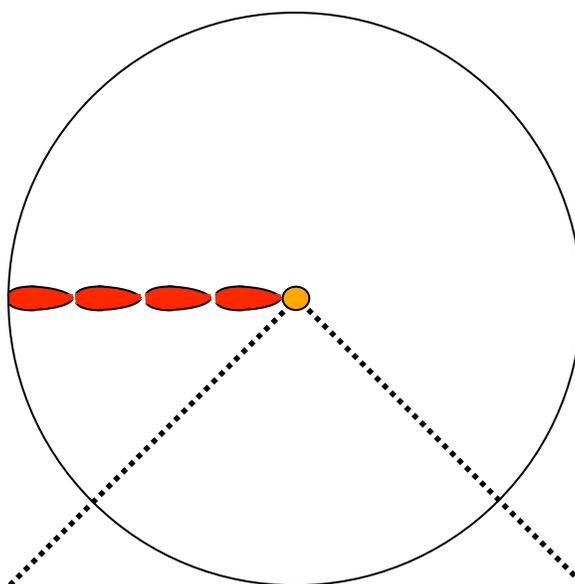
*B. Heckstall-Smith, Yacht Racing, A Text Book on the Sport.*

When rounding marks you are under the jurisdiction of the Rule 18. The RRS was written by a committee, and Rule 18 is where it shows. Five main sections, nine subsections, five exemptions, caveats, references to official definitions — everything any sea lawyer could ask for. As always, the purpose of this document is not (heaven forbid) to turn you into a sea lawyer or teach you how to exploit the rule for tactical advantage; it is to help you get around a mark without incurring a protest.

*RRS definition, modified by RRS E 1.3(b) The diameter of the zone may be changed by the Sailing Instructions for a given event.*

Rule 18 uses three definitions. The first of these is *the zone*. Its perimeter is defined by four hull-length circle around a mark. This is the official definition of “nearing a mark” or “about to round a mark.” A boat is in the zone when any part of her hull is in the zone.

*The zone, a four boat-length circular area around a mark of the course. The dotted lines are the laylines, the most direct course to the windward mark.*



For the Solings, the zone is roughly 26 feet in diameter; for the RG65s it's about 16 feet. Determining the perimeter of zone is tricky enough for crews in a “big boat,” and even more difficult in radio sailing, owing to distance and sight angle. **It is worthwhile for the first few races to practice sail four boat-lengths from various marks to see how the distance looks from your favorite vantage point.** You might be surprised at how large it really is.

The second definition is that of *proper course*. This follows the official definition used in Rule 17: the course *approaching* and *rounding* the mark you would sail if no other boat was there, or, in other words, the course that you think gets you around the mark in the shortest amount of time. This is an obviously fuzzy definition; we'll say more about it shortly.

The third definition is that of *mark-room*. This was added to the 2009 rules in an attempt to simplify the presentation of the rule without changing the nature of a race. Mark-room is, in effect, a limited form of right of way. If another boat must give you mark-room, that boat cannot interfere with your sailing a *proper course* around the mark. If she does interfere, two things happen: she incurs a penalty, and you are entitled to on-the-spot exoneration if she forces you to violate any of the basic right of way rules except 14, the duty to avoid collision. **To avoid a protest involving your application of mark-room, round within one hull length if you are sailing a Soling and two if you are sailing an RG65.** The wider room for the RG65s is needed for their deep keels to clear the mooring line of the marks.

RRS 18.5

The discussions that follow reduce the number of cases in Rule 18 to a few rules of thumb. The writers of the 2009-2012 Rule 18 were motivated by a desire to “minimize changes to the way the ‘game’ is currently played.” The game, in this case, being the tactics “big boat” skippers use to gain advantage at the marks. These tactics are of less use in radio sailing, where distance, sight lines, and blocked vision make it difficult to determine your position relative to other boats. They are of even less use most days on our pond, where shifty and inconstant winds can turn a cute trick into a foul in a heartbeat. When a cluster of boats are “dicing” with each other at a mark, for example, sailing past and going by on a reach may gain you more distance than joining the melee ever would. **Think ahead when nearing a mark and plan your course to minimize the chance of a foul or protest.** Even when you’ve gained skill in boat handling it’s well to remember the old pilot’s adage that “superior pilots use their superior judgement to avoid situations which require the use of their superior skill.”

*Dick Rose, et al., The New Section C Rules in Part 2 of The Racing Rules of Sailing for 2009-2012*

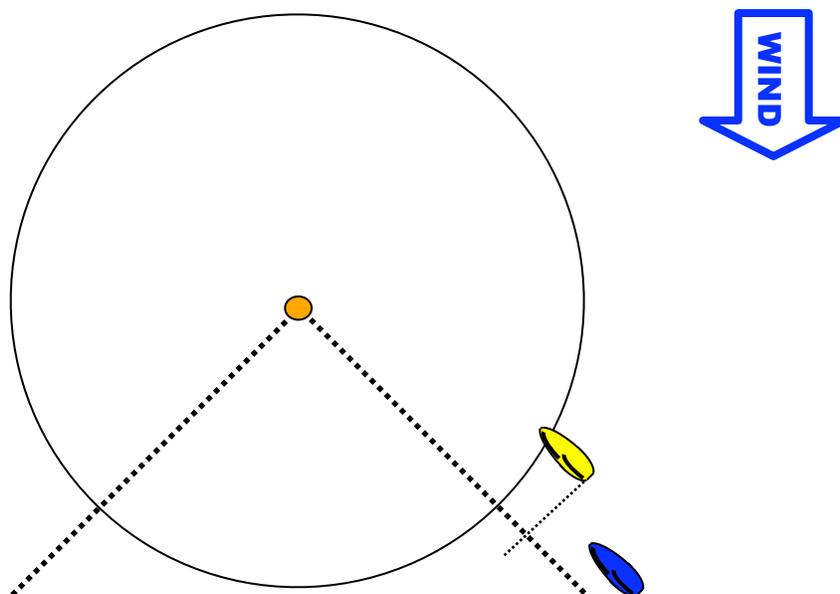
### **Rounding the Windward Mark**

The windward mark generally sees the most interactions between boats. On our pond, this is because of the relatively short distance between the start line and the mark, and because trailing boats tend to jam up against leading boats as the leaders slow and tack to round the mark. When there are five or more boats rounding at once it’s very much a situation of “we’re all in this together.”

We will limit ourselves to cases of *port side rounding* or *leaving the mark to port*, which is where the mark is to be rounded in a counterclockwise manner. Our club almost never uses starboard-side roundings at a windward mark because the application of Rule 18 gets much more complex.

The simplest situation between two boats is when the first of two boats on the same tack is clear ahead when entering the zone:

*Even though Blue is the inside boat, Yellow got to the zone first and is entitled to mark-room until she has rounded, even if Blue later gets an inside overlap within the zone. (RRS 18.2(b) and 18.2(c))*

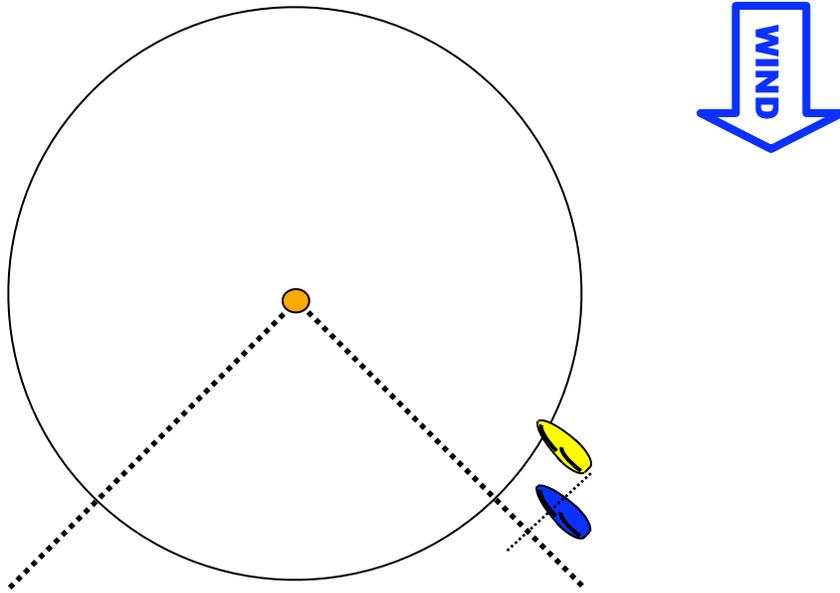


The boat which is clear ahead gets mark-room, which informally is the ability to sail a proper course to and around the mark without the other boat getting in her way. The right to mark-room is “locked in” until mark is rounded, the leading boat sails further than four hull lengths from the mark, *or either boat tacks*. **If you are clear ahead at the zone and a faster boat on the same tack is bearing down on you, hail “No room, clear ahead” and live up to it by rounding close to the mark. If you are clear astern, acknowledge such hails and stay out of the other boat’s way.**

The situation changes completely if there is overlap between the two boats when the first enters the zone.

The caveats are the same as in the previous case: mark-room is “locked in” until Blue rounds, leaves the zone, or somebody tacks. **If you are the inside boat, hail “Inside overlap, room please.” If you are the outside boat, acknowledge any such hails and stay out of the other boat’s way.**

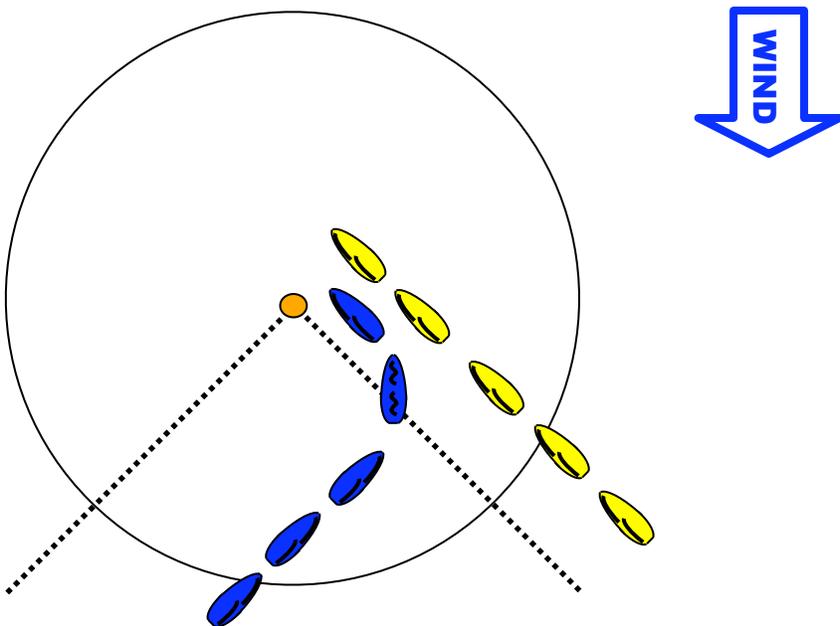
Since the boundary of the zone is hard to determine, the RRS has a rule that in case of doubt about overlap, no overlap exists. **It’s best to be sure you have continuous overlap from clearly outside the zone to clearly inside it before asserting the right to mark-room.**



*Now Blue is overlapped with Yellow when Yellow enters the zone. Because Blue is the inside boat, she is entitled to mark-room. (RRS 18.2(b))*

If two boats enter the zone to windward on opposite tacks, no part of Rule 18 “kicks in” until one of them tacks:

RRS 18.2(d)



*Blue comes up on port tack and tacks to leeward of Yellow. The rights and obligations of both boats are the same as if this had occurred in open water. What is different are the restrictions on Blue’s right of way. (RRS 18.3)*

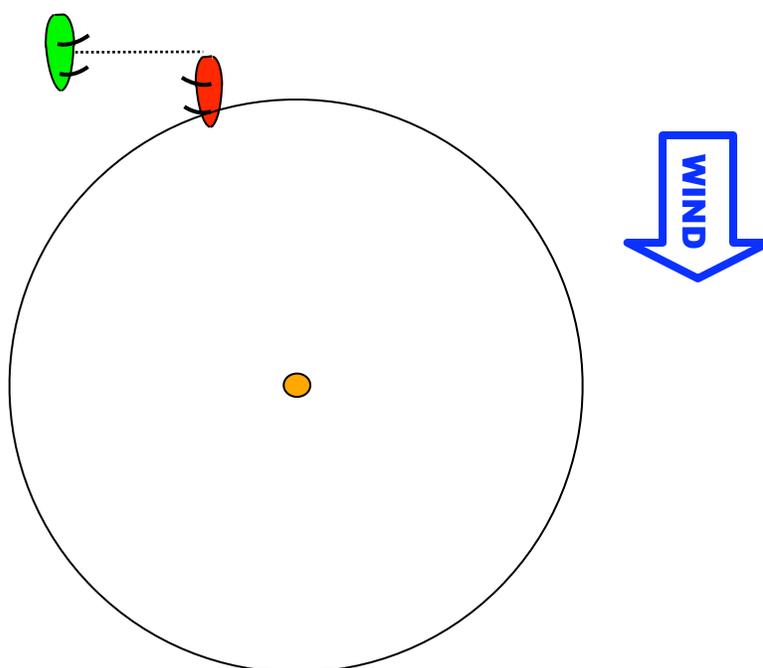
The most common scenario is when a port tack boat comes up and achieves right of way by tacking to leeward of a starboard tacker. First, this maneuver must follow the steps described earlier in the discussion of Rules 13, 15, and 16: keep clear while tacking and give the other boat room to keep clear. If the maneuver is performed outside the zone, then one of the two cases described above will hold, that is, entering the zone overlapped or with one boat clear ahead.

If a boat gains inside overlap by tacking inside the zone, then although she has right of way by Rule 11 (windward/leeward), because right of way was gained inside the zone that right of way is restricted: the inside boat cannot cause the outside boat to sail above close-hauled, and the inside boat cannot prevent the outside boat from rounding on the proper side. *If the outside boat has to head up to keep clear to the point where her sails luff, then the inside boat has committed a foul. If the inside boat blocks the outside boat from rounding, then again the inside boat has committed a foul.* **If you are the boat fetching the mark, hold your course until the other boat has completed her tack, then give her room up to sailing close hauled.** If you are the tacking boat, don't attempt this maneuver unless you are *sure* you can pull it off. **If there is the slightest doubt, duck behind the other boat and give her room.**

### Rounding Leeward Marks

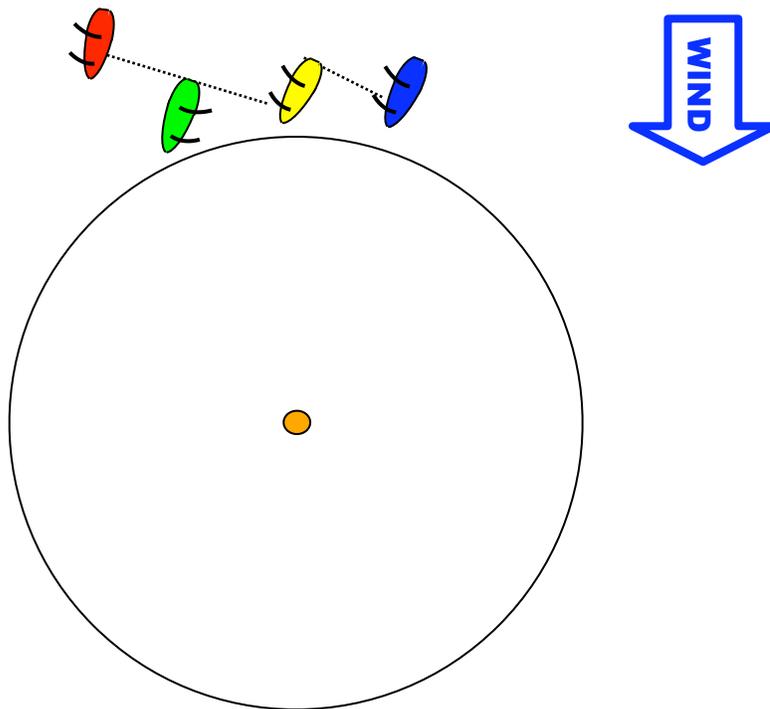
The basic concepts of mark rounding are the same for a leeward mark as they are for a windward one. Certain details are different in significant ways, most notably in the notion of overlap, whose definition was changed in the 2009 rules. For years, overlap only existed between boats on the same tack. Now, *overlap can exist between boats on opposite tacks if they are sailing more than ninety degrees off the wind*, that is, running before the wind to some extent. This new definition has an important effect when it comes to rounding leeward marks: *a boat may simultaneously not have right of way but have the right to mark-room*. This occurs when an *overlapped, port tack* boat is the *inside* boat at the boundary to the zone:

*Two boats at the boundary of the zone for a leeward mark to be left to port (counterclockwise rounding). Until she enters the zone, Red must keep clear of Green. Once in the zone, Green must give Red mark-room, and that right to mark-room is maintained no matter where Green sails within the zone.*



Note that there can be a “cascading overlap” between several boats. Such “cascades” can lead to complex applications of the rules. Sorting them out is difficult enough when you have a birds-eye view of a static diagram and all the time in the world. It is right on the edge of impossible when you are looking at boats from a difficult and distant angle and have just a few seconds to decide what to do. **Avoid traffic jams at a leeward mark if at all possible. If you are trapped in one, give enough room for all inside boats to round. Don't try to zoom up and squeeze between a “cascade” of overlapped boats and the mark.**

*RRS Definition of “Overlap.”*



*Red overlaps, Green, who overlaps Yellow, who overlaps Blue. Green and Red then also overlap Blue by the RRS Definition of “overlap.” Red, in particular must give the other three boats mark-room. If Blue came up from behind, she is entitled to mark-room from Yellow only if it is possible for Yellow to give it. (RRS 18.2(e)).*

Rule 18 also imposes restrictions on boats entitled to mark-room when their proper course requires a gybe (most commonly, at leeward marks). A boat in this situation must sail no wider than is necessary to round the mark. As with a windward mark, **round within one boat length if you are sailing a Soling and two if you are sailing an RG65.**

### Leeward Gates

Our courses often use a leeward *gate*, two marks which you sail between and after passing them you can round either one. Such a course mitigates the problem of determining rights in a traffic jam at a single leeward mark. The course should be set so that the gate marks are at least eight boat lengths apart, so there is no ambiguity as to who has mark-room.

The limit on proper course does not apply at a gate; as long as you go between the marks, you can sail as you like to and around either of them, provided, of course, that you obey the obligations of Rule 18 with regard to any other boats in the zone.

### **Finishing**

Whew! Almost there. You are eligible to finish when you have taken all the penalty turns you owe, including any you may have incurred by hitting the finish marks. Last minute penalty turns may be taken straddling the finish line or even by circling a finish mark, however to officially finish you must cross a line connecting the course side of the finish marks in the direction of the course.

The finish marks are marks of the course and as such are subject to all the clauses of Rule 18, including the zone and mark-room. So if you and another boat are converging on a finish mark, remember the advice given for rounding marks; the only difference being that you sail past a finish mark instead of rounding it.

Congratulations, you made it, all around the course. In a very short time you'll internalize these basics and be ready to study some of the nuances of the RRS. Just remember, fair sailing with a properly tuned boat in clear air wins races *and* makes friends in the process.

## Appendix A: Protests and Turns

You should recognize when you've committed a foul and take your penalty turn without requiring that anyone call you on it. A good rule of thumb here is given by Bruce Willis in his book: is the other person aggrieved? If the other competitor seems even the least bit annoyed that you did not give way or give room, then you definitely "owe them a turn."

There will be times when you are unaware that you have broken a rule, or lost concentration, or had your vision blocked and you'll hear another competitor call "Protest" followed by your sail number. What do you do then?

In 999 out of 1000 cases, just take your penalty turn. Even if you think you're right, all you stand to lose is a point or two in one heat out of a half-dozen heats, in one event out of the ten or more that determine your yearly score. You are allowed, under the rules, to refuse to take your turn, in which case the other competitor is allowed under the rules to file a formal protest at the end of the heat. Then we have to stop sailing, convene a protest committee comprised of the senior members who weren't part of the incident, listen to each side, and decide the outcome — an outcome which can result in the disqualification of one or both competitors. Then sailing resumes with a bunch of grumpy skippers who have been waiting around for all this to finish.

A far better approach, if you have hailed "Protest" and the other boat has refused to take a penalty turn, is to treat the situation as a learning opportunity rather than a court battle, and ask that senior members meet with you, the other person, and the rule book afterwards and sort out what would have been the right thing to do.

Again, the "no perceived damage, no foul" criterial is useful when deciding when to protest another boat. If you have to dodge a give-way boat who is far behind you, and your dodge costs you nothing, then exercising your technical right to protest does little. It's much better, after the heat or at the end of the day, to talk to the other skipper and help them better understand the rules.

There are people who see the rules, and protesting, as a weapon to be applied aggressively. This is an attitude we actively discourage in our club. Practiced consistently this attitude shades into "gamesmanship," which the Royal Yachting Association aptly

defines as “behavior of questionable fairness but not strictly illegal tactics,” and is a violation of Rule 2.

Perhaps the best comment on the aggressive, “sea lawyer” attitude was made by Hobie Alter, father of the famous Hobie Cat. He said, in the context of a larger event than the kind we run, “So I had a couple of problems with guys that were really tight on the rules, and really weren't well-liked. I told them, ‘You know what, when you go up to get your trophy, you're going to have five people clap for you rather than a hundred. Is that really how you want it?’”

## Appendix B: Starboard Tack

Nautical terms are some of the oldest words in the English language, and “starboard” is one of them. The term goes back to the Vikings, who steered with an oar hung over the right side of the stern. This was known as the “steer board” and that came down into English as “starboard.”

The word “tack” comes from square rigged ships. The “tack” as ship is on is the side where the corners of the lower sails are made fast to the railing. This is, of course, the windward side.

Sailors always refer to winds using the direction the wind is coming from, or more simply, the direction you are pointed if the wind is in your face. If the windward side of the boat is the right hand side, then the wind is from starboard and you are on starboard tack.

Starboard tack has had right of way, initially in entries to harbors, from time immemorial. The most common explanation for this is that when you are steering a fore-and-aft rigged boat with an oar on the starboard side, and you are on starboard tack, your vision to your port side is blocked by your sail. No matter what tack you are on, your vision to starboard is clear. Thus, supposedly, the logic that port tack keeps clear because they have the better view of the encounter. So, again by legend, when you hail “starboard” to another boat you are invoking ideas that go back to the Vikings.



## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Angelo Buscemi for permission to use his Protest Diagram Kit to prepare the illustrations for this paper, and Trevor Lewis, Lester Gilbert, and John Ball for their aid and insights.

Earl Boebert

Commodore, Duke City Model Yacht Club

[boebert@swcp.com](mailto:boebert@swcp.com)