



SMART Classes

Introduction:

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About the rules

- Rules are published by World Sailing, updated every four years
- Australian Sailing adds their own prescriptions
- New edition January 1st, 2025
- Download PDF from the website sailing.org.au
 - Australian Sailing no longer print hard copies
- The rule book is made up of:
 - Definitions
 - Signal flags
 - Parts 1 through 7
 - Appendices A through T
- There is also a comprehensive Case Book used by Judges to provide clarification on the rules

Sections of the Rule Book

- Definitions - Important to be able to understand the rules
- Signals - Mostly start sequence flags
- Part 1 – Fundamental Rules
- Part 2 – When boats meet (5 pages and only 3 are generally relevant)
- Part 3 – Conduct of a race
- Part 4 – Other requirements when racing
- Part 5 – Protests
- Part 6 – Entry and Qualification
- Part 7 – Race Organisation
- Appendices – Optional, e.g. Match Racing, Recommendations on SI's

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But (there is always a “but”)

There are ***lots*** of details that are extremely significant in those three pages

Who in the room has a reasonable knowledge
of the rules of footy?

How many of you have read an AFL rule book?

A few quick quiz questions:

- When do the rules start? i.e. when does port/starboard take affect?
- *“The rules of **Part 2** apply between boats that are sailing in or near the racing area and intend to **race**, are **racing**, or have been **racing**.”*
- *“However, a boat not **racing** shall not be penalised for breaking one of these rules “*

A few quick quiz questions:

- Are you entitled to mark room at the finish line?
- Yes
- Are you entitled to mark room at the start boat?
- It depends
- *“Section C rules (mark room) do not apply at a starting **mark** surrounded by navigable water or at its anchor line from the time boats are approaching them to **start** until they have passed them.”*

A few quick quiz questions:

- Are sound signals mandatory?
- It depends
- *“Times shall be taken from the visual signals; the absence of a sound signal shall be disregarded.”*
- This text is within Rule 26 which describes the 5,4,1,Start sequence, so only applies to these signals. All other situations where sound signals are in the rules, they are mandatory
- So is it mandatory to get a sound signal for the first place boat?
- No It is just a generally accepted tradition

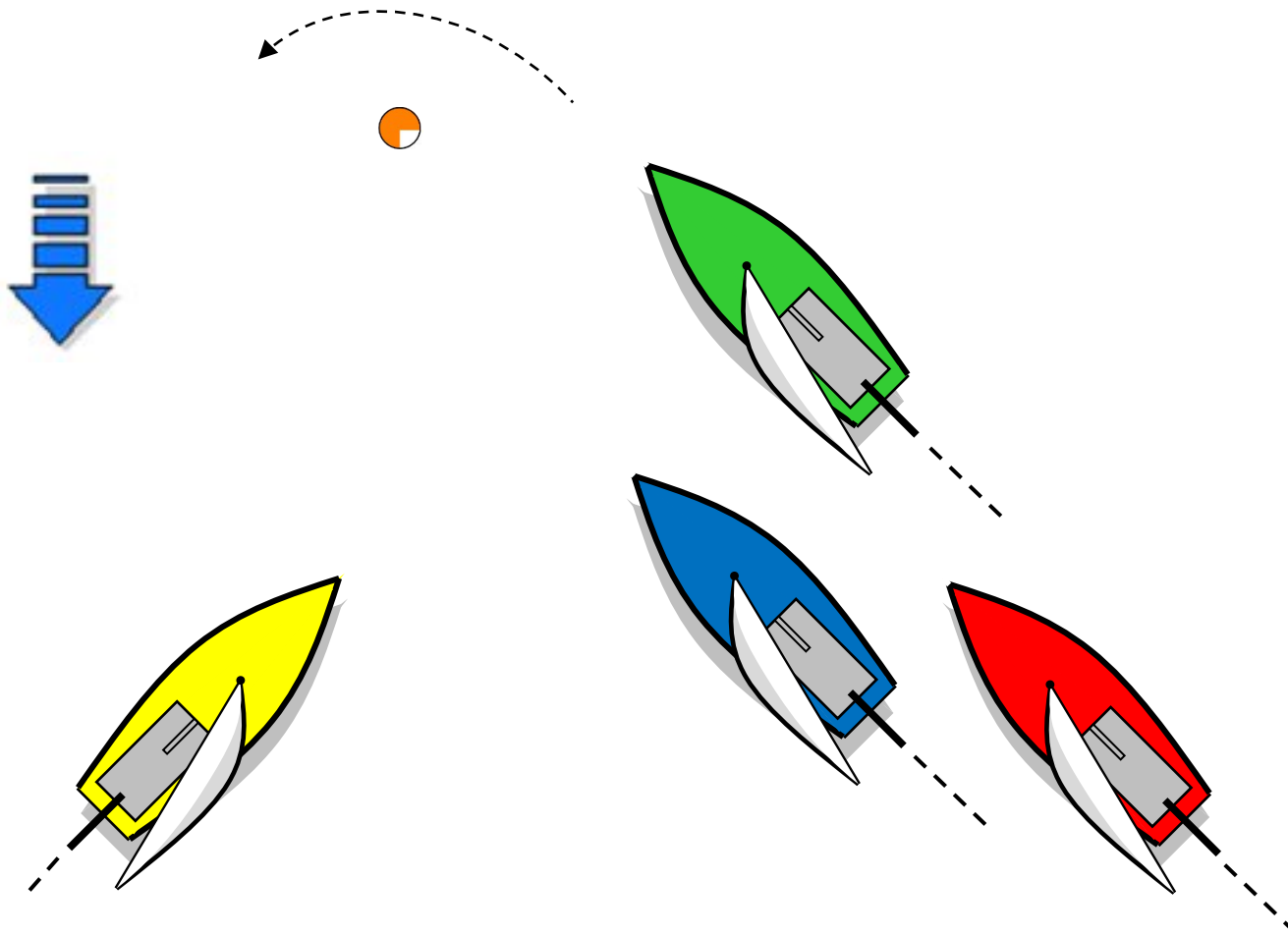
Definitions

- Like any legal document, before you can get into the meat of the document, you need to define certain words and their meaning throughout the remainder of the document
- For each of the rules that we are going to look at there are generally some relevant definitions
- But we will first have a look at a few important definitions

Definitions

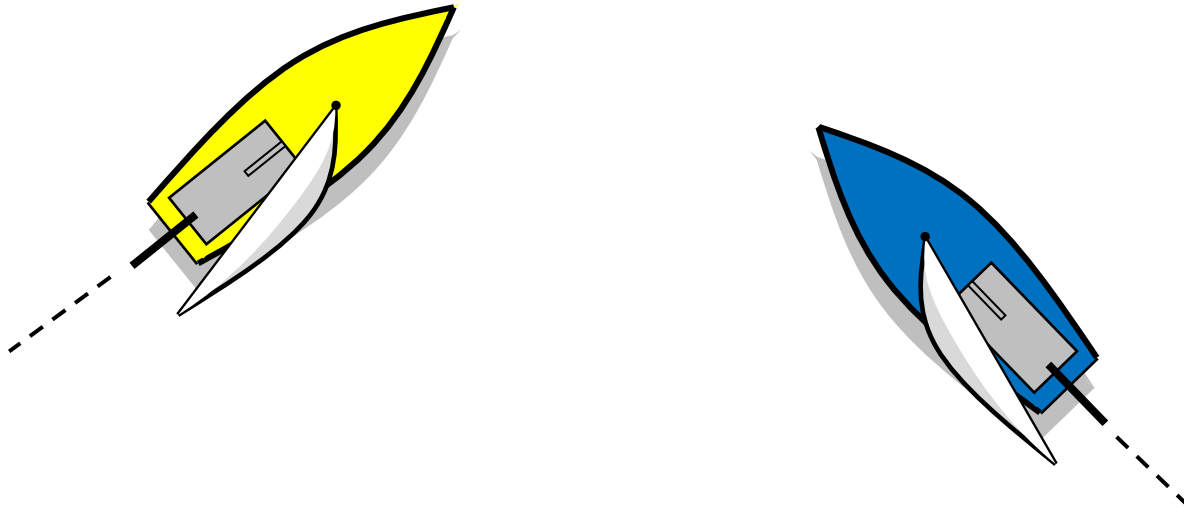
- ***Racing:*** A boat is *racing* from its preparatory signal until it *finishes* and clears the finishing line and *marks* or retires, or until the race committee signals a general recall, *postponement* or *abandonment*.
- ***Room:*** The space a boat needs in the existing conditions, including space to comply with its obligations under the rules of [Part 2](#) and [rule 31](#), while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanlike way.
- ***Zone:*** The area around a *mark* within a distance of three hull lengths of the boat nearer to it. A boat is in the *zone* when any part of its hull is in the *zone*.
- ***Keep Clear*** A boat *keeps clear* of a right-of-way boat
 - (a) if the right-of-way boat can sail its course with no need to take avoiding action and,
 - (b) when the boats are *overlapped*, if the right-of-way boat can also change course in both directions without immediately making contact.

Rights and Obligations



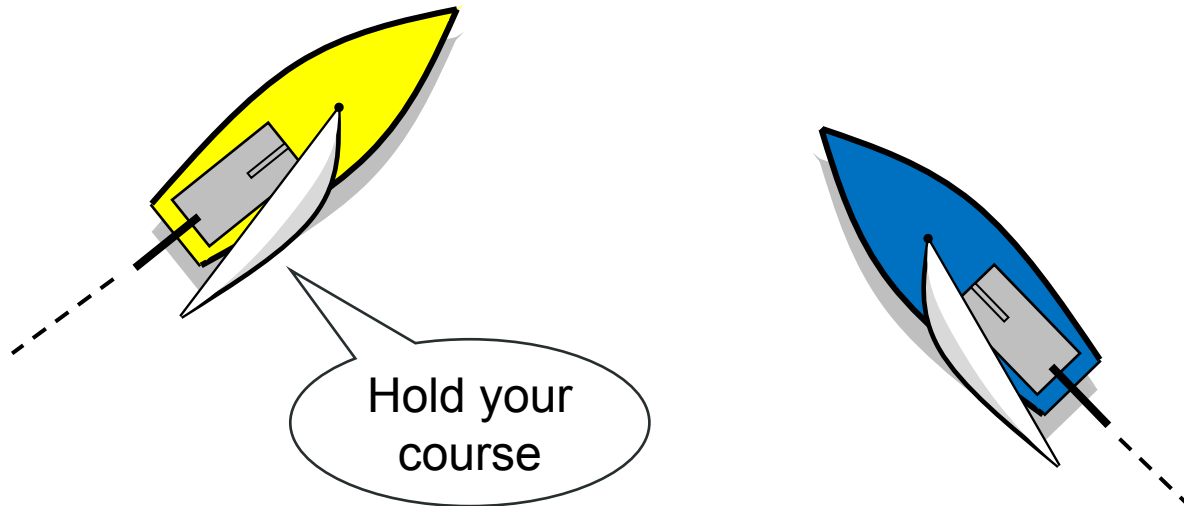
- Every boat at every point has both Rights and Obligations
- Green has the right for the yellow boat to keep clear, and the obligation to keep clear of the blue boat
- The yellow boat has the obligation to keep clear of all three boats, but the right to expect that the blue boat will not immediately bear away into him perhaps in an attempt to gybe

Port / Starboard



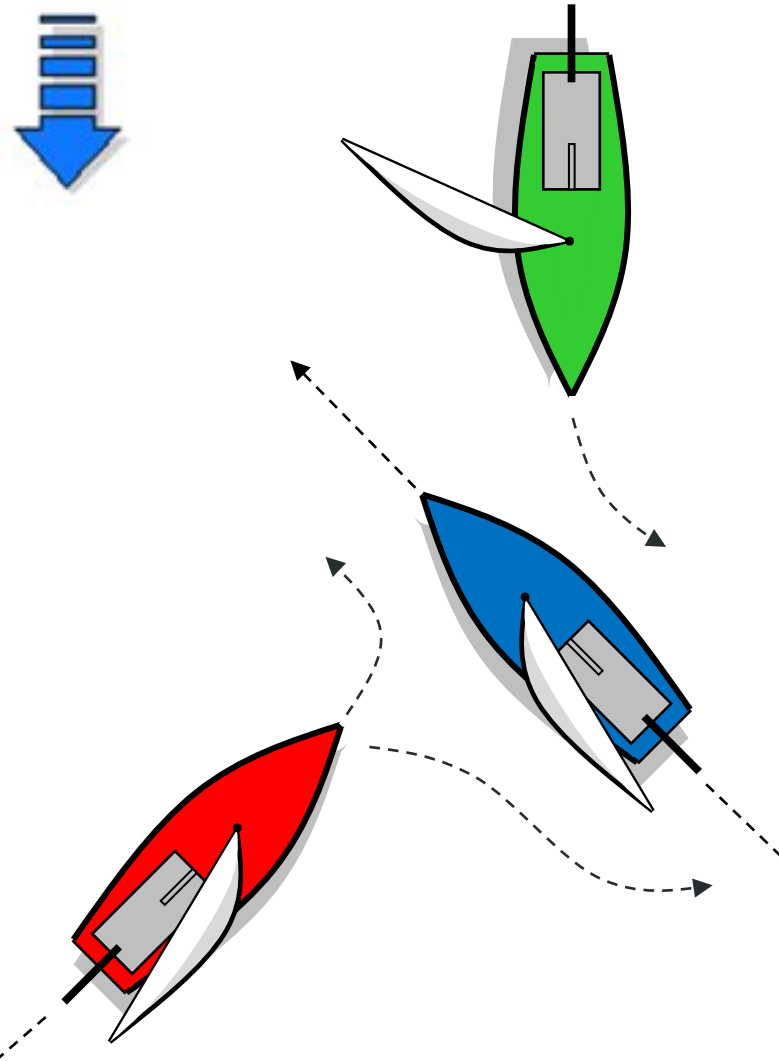
- Rule 10: “When boats are on opposite *tacks*, a *port-tack* boat shall *keep clear* of a *starboard-tack* boat.”
- As the two boats get closer, it is the obligation of the port boat to recognise that there is a problem and take avoiding action.
- As they get closer the starboard boat has the obligation to not alter course so as to prevent the port boat from avoiding her
- Case 50: If there is a ***genuine and reasonable apprehension*** of collision on the part of the right of way boat, she shall alter course to avoid contact

Port / Starboard



- What about a hail of “Hold your course” from the port boat?
- Blue may alter course as long as she gives yellow room and opportunity to keep clear
- The silliest call you can make.
- If it goes to protest it just tells the protest committee that you knew that it was going to be tight

Port / Starboard



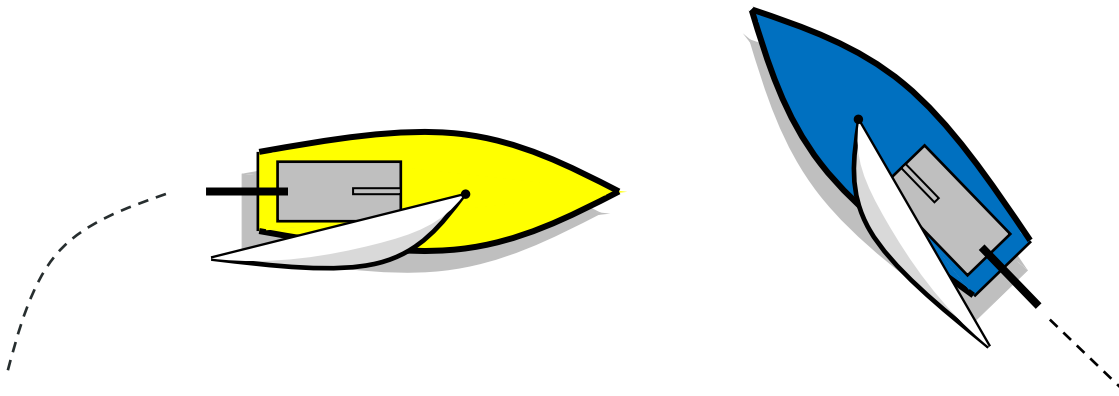
It doesn't matter if one boat is going upwind and the other is going downwind, the port boat must avoid the starboard boat

A hail of "starboard" from the blue boat to the port boat is not required, makes no difference in a protest hearing but obviously a good idea especially if you think that the port boat hasn't seen you.

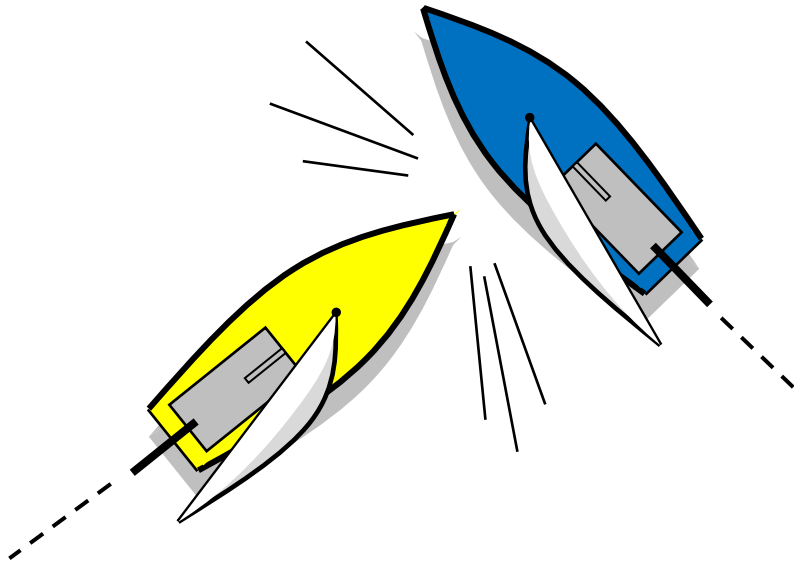
Port / Starboard



- Rule 16.2: “ when a *port-tack* boat is *keeping clear* by sailing to pass to leeward of a *starboard-tack* boat, the *starboard-tack* boat shall not bear away



Avoiding Contact



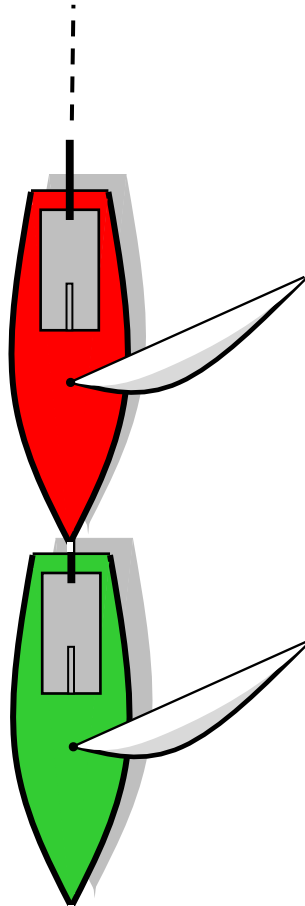
Rule 14: “A boat shall avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible.”

Even if you are the right of way boat, if it becomes obvious that the give way boat is not going to give you room, you need to do everything you can to avoid contact

In this situation, both boats would most likely be disqualified if it went to protest. The port boat for failing to give way to a starboard boat, and both boats for failing to avoid a collision

Importantly: “Doing everything you can to avoid contact” includes having an effective lookout

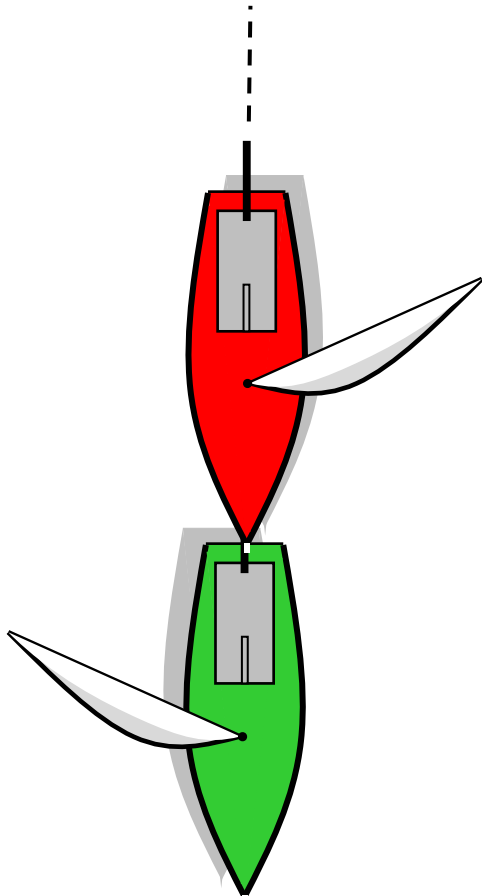
Clear Ahead / Clear Astern



Definition: “One boat is *clear astern* of another when her hull are behind a line abeam from the aftermost point of the other boat’s hull and equipment in normal position. The other boat is *clear ahead*.”

Rule 12: “When boats are on the same *tack* and not *overlapped*, a boat *clear astern* shall *keep clear* of a boat *clear ahead*.”

Clear Ahead / Clear Astern

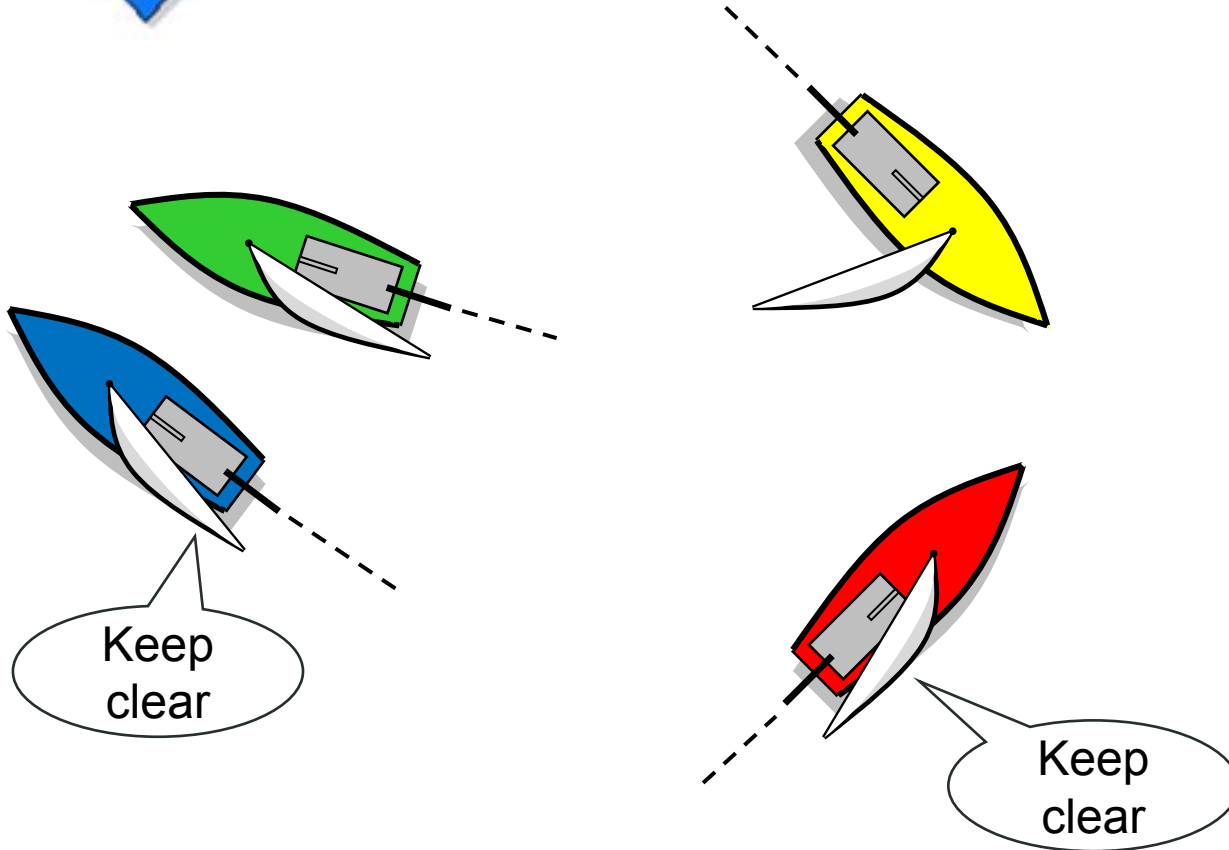


Which boat is the right of way boat?
Red or Green?

The Red boat as she is on starboard
tack and the green boat is on port tack

The red boat has right of way

Windward/ Leeward



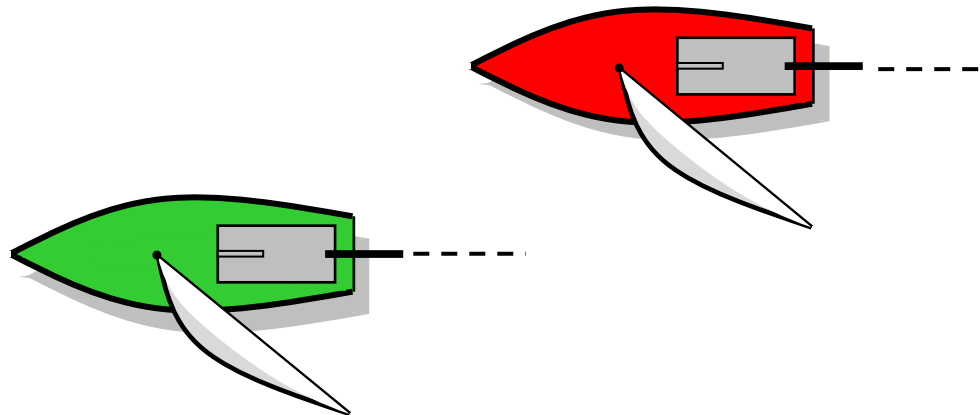
Definition: “A boat’s *leeward* side is the side that is away from the wind. The other is the *windward* boat.”

Rule: “When boats are on the same *tack* and *overlapped*, a *windward* boat shall *keep clear* of a *leeward* boat.”

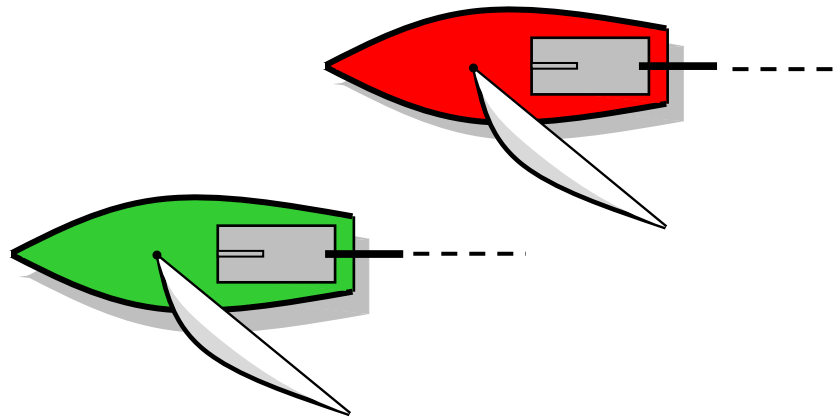
Important is to understand the definition of “keep clear”.

“.... if the right-of-way boat can also change course in both directions without immediately making contact”

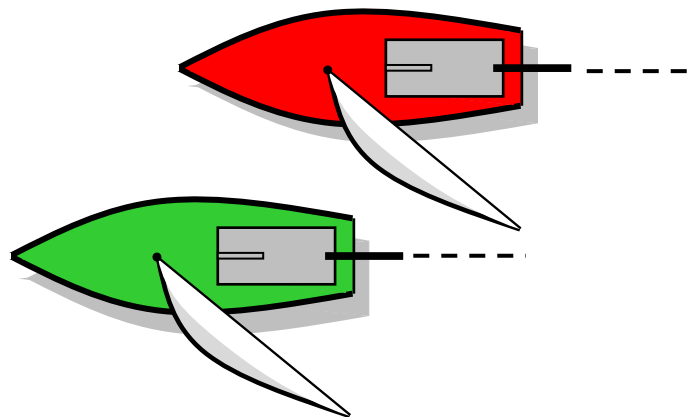
Windward/ Leeward – establishing the overlap



Windward/ Leeward – establishing the overlap



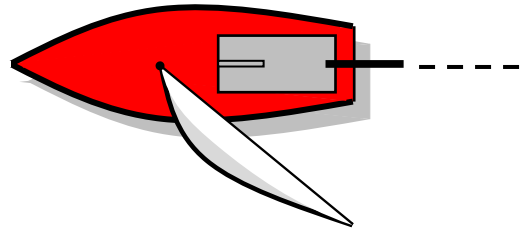
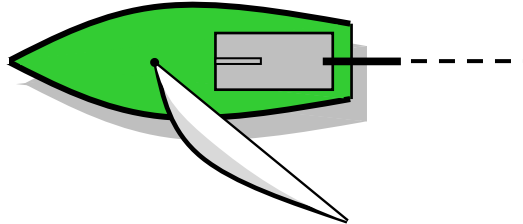
Windward/ Leeward – establishing the overlap



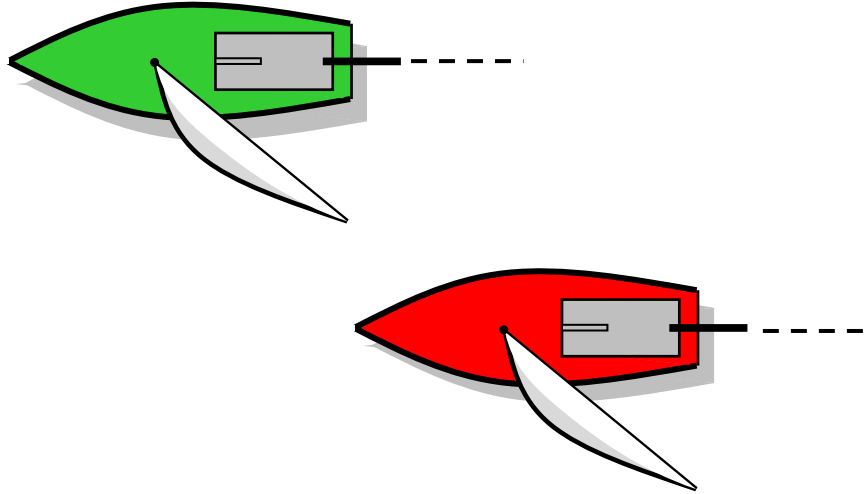
- Rule 11 applies to the red boat – Windward boat keep clear
- The green boat can luff the red boat up to head to wind, as long as they give the red boat *room* to keep clear

..... depending on how the overlap was established

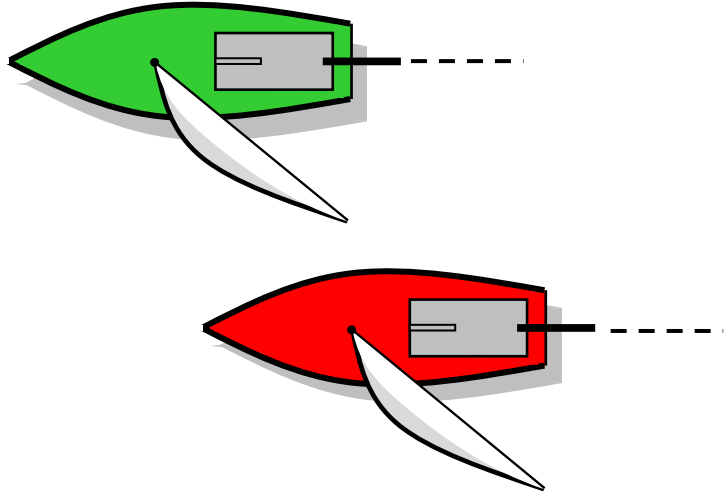
Windward/ Leeward – establishing the overlap



Windward/ Leeward – establishing the overlap



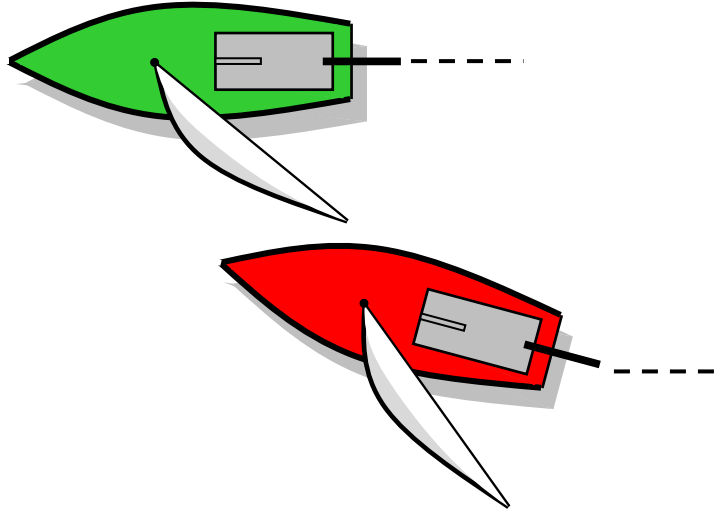
Windward/ Leeward – establishing the overlap



- Rule 11 still applies to the green boat – Windward boat keep clear
- Rule 17 applies to the red boat –

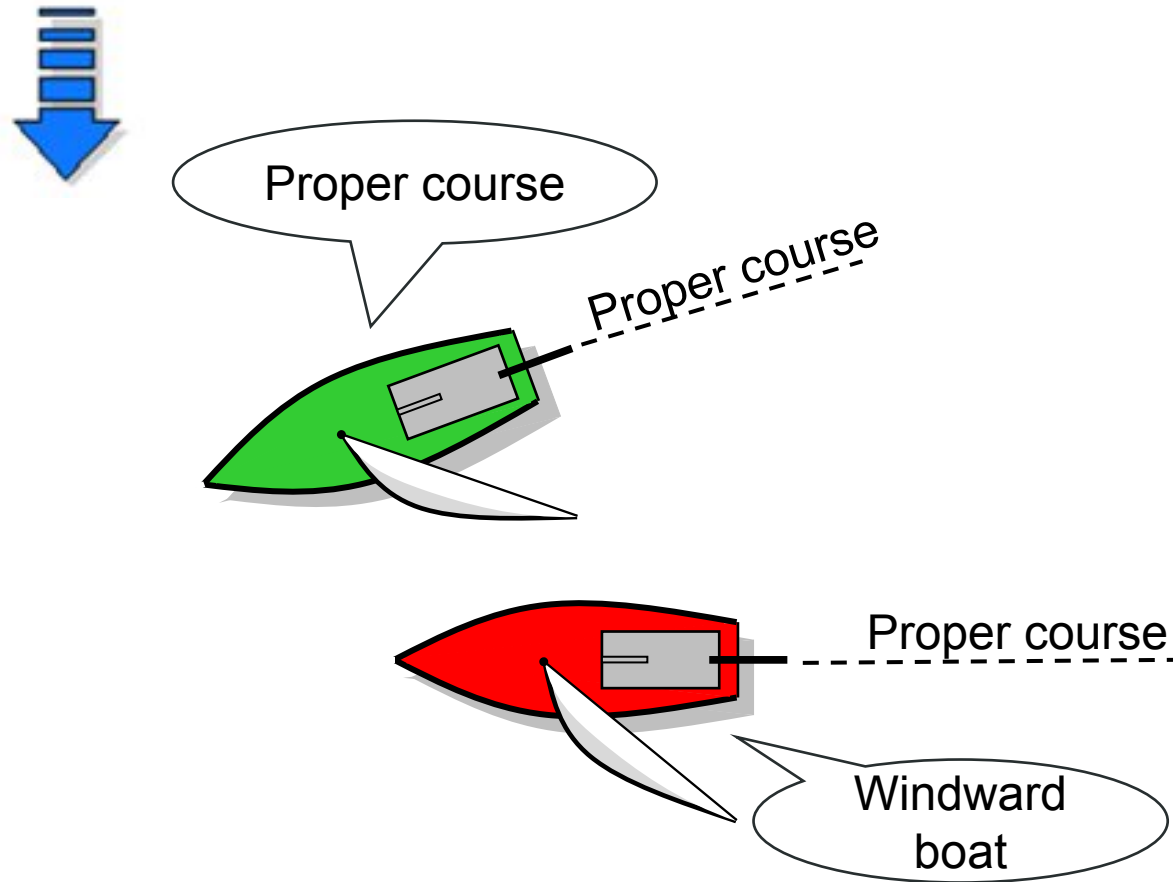
“If a boat *clear astern* becomes *overlapped* within two of its hull lengths to *leeward* of a boat on the same *tack*, it shall not sail above its *proper course* while they remain on the same *tack* and *overlapped* within that distance, unless in doing so it promptly sails astern of the other boat.”

Windward/ Leeward – establishing the overlap



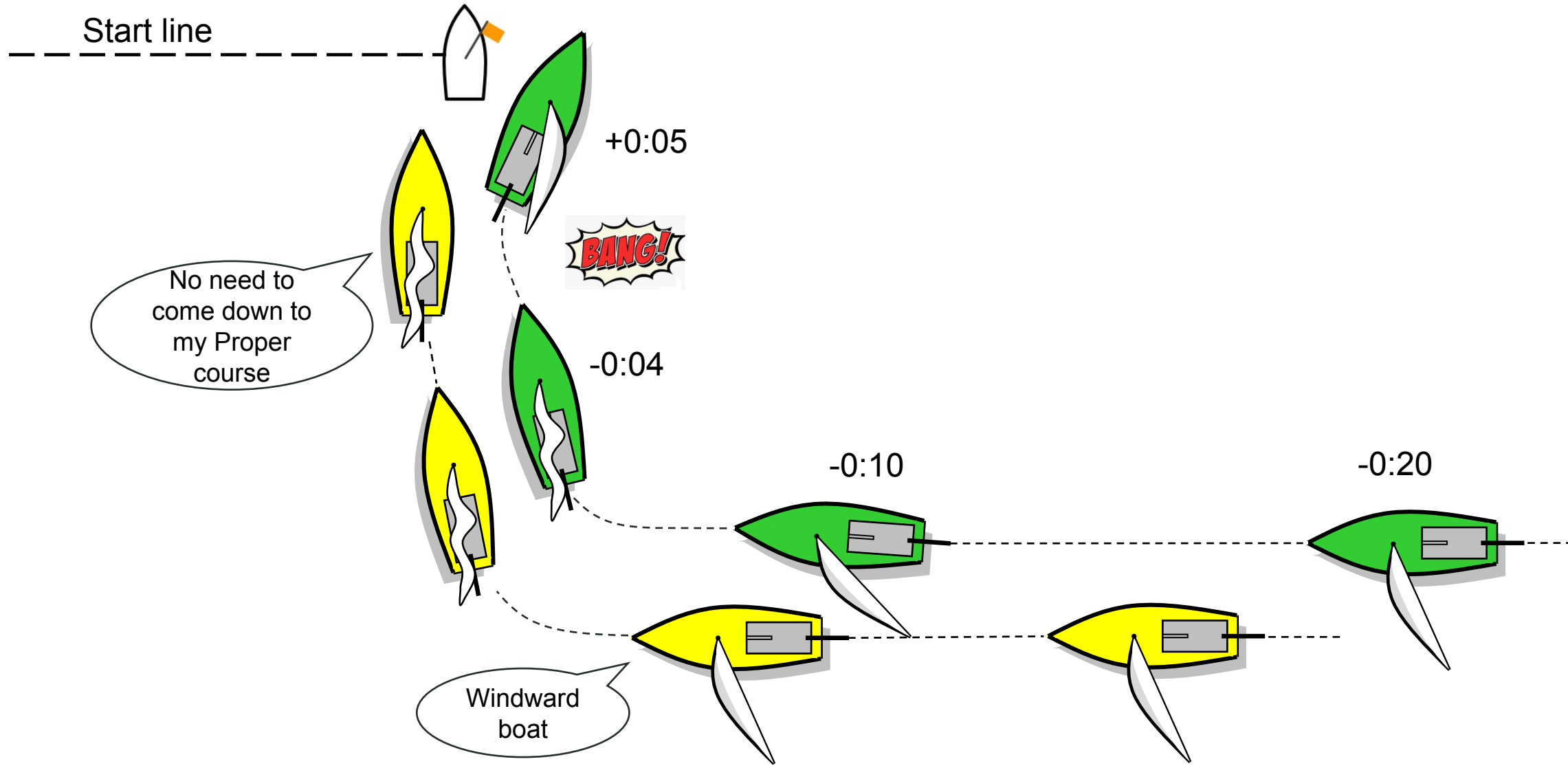
- If the red boat sails above her proper course, she has broken rule 17
- If the green boat does not respond, she has broken rule 11
- In a protest, both boats would be disqualified for breaking a rule
- The only recourse for the green boat is to alter course to windward to keep clear and protest the red boat for sailing above her proper course

Windward/ Leeward

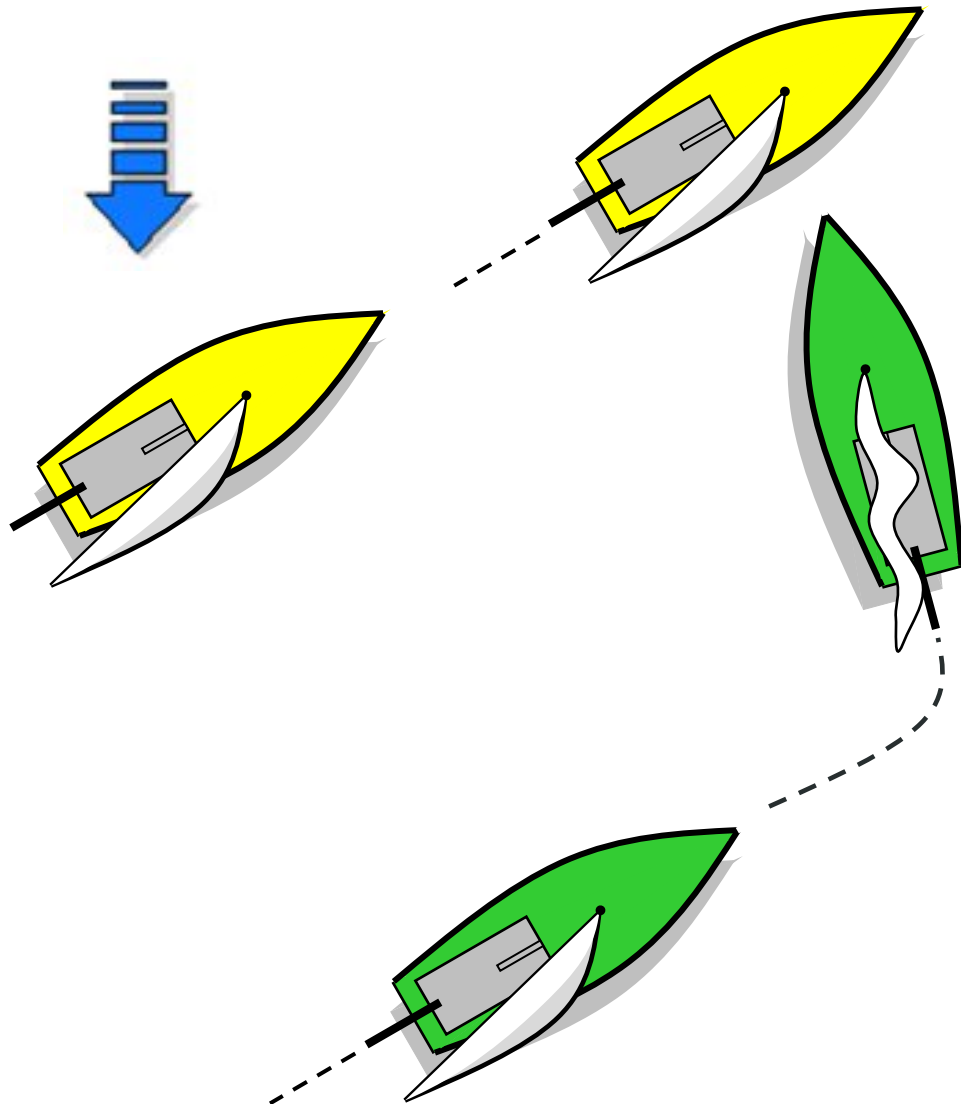


- The proper course of the windward boat is irrelevant
- Definition: **Proper Course:** “A course a boat would choose in order to *sail the course* and *finish* as soon as possible in the absence of the other boats”

Windward/ Leeward – at the start



Tacking

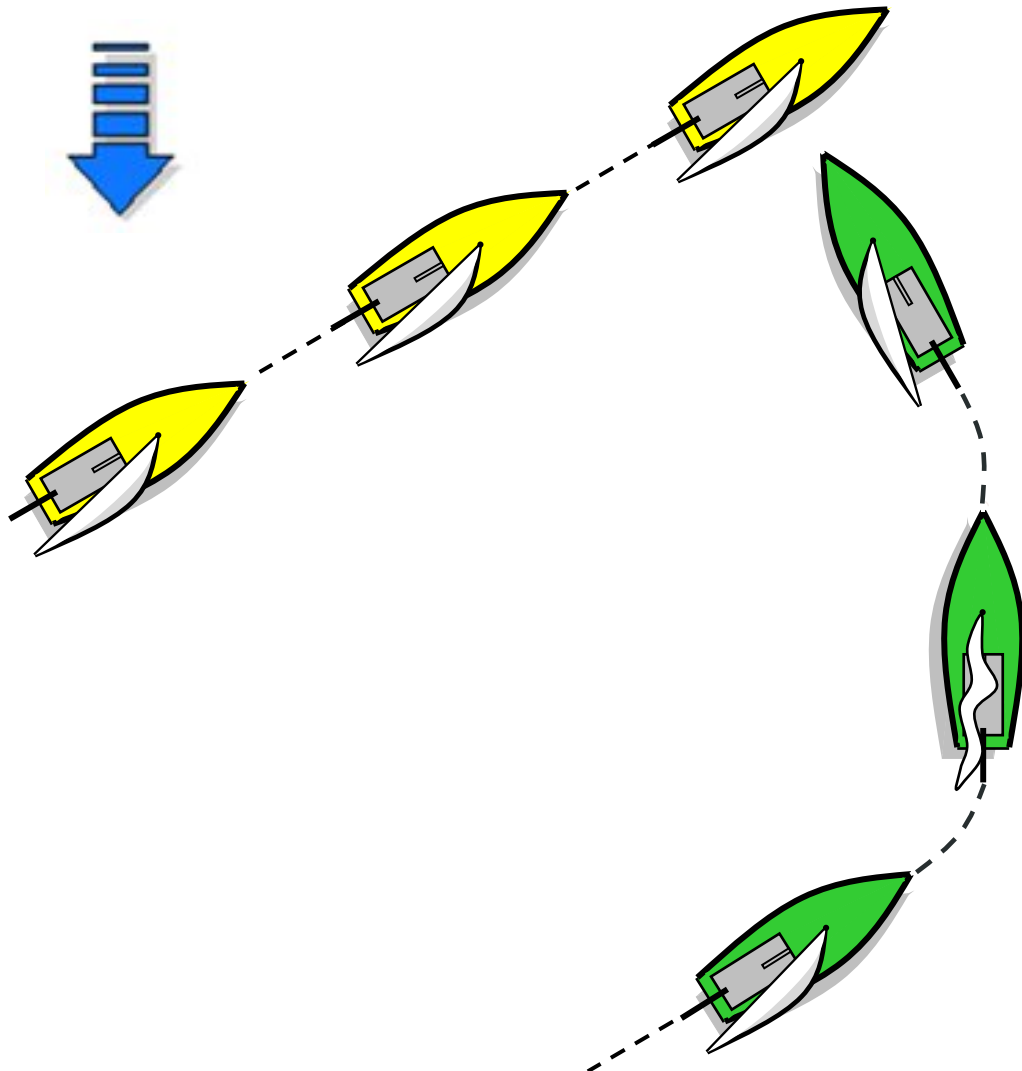


Rule 13: “After a boat passes head to wind, she shall *keep clear* of other boats until she is on a close-hauled course.”

During the first part of a tack, the green boat is altering course to windward and is still the right of way boat. As soon as she passes head to wind she must *keep clear* of the yellow boat until the “hull” is in the close hauled position, i.e. tack is “complete”.

Note that the trim of the sails has nothing to do with when you tack is “complete”.

Acquiring Right of Way

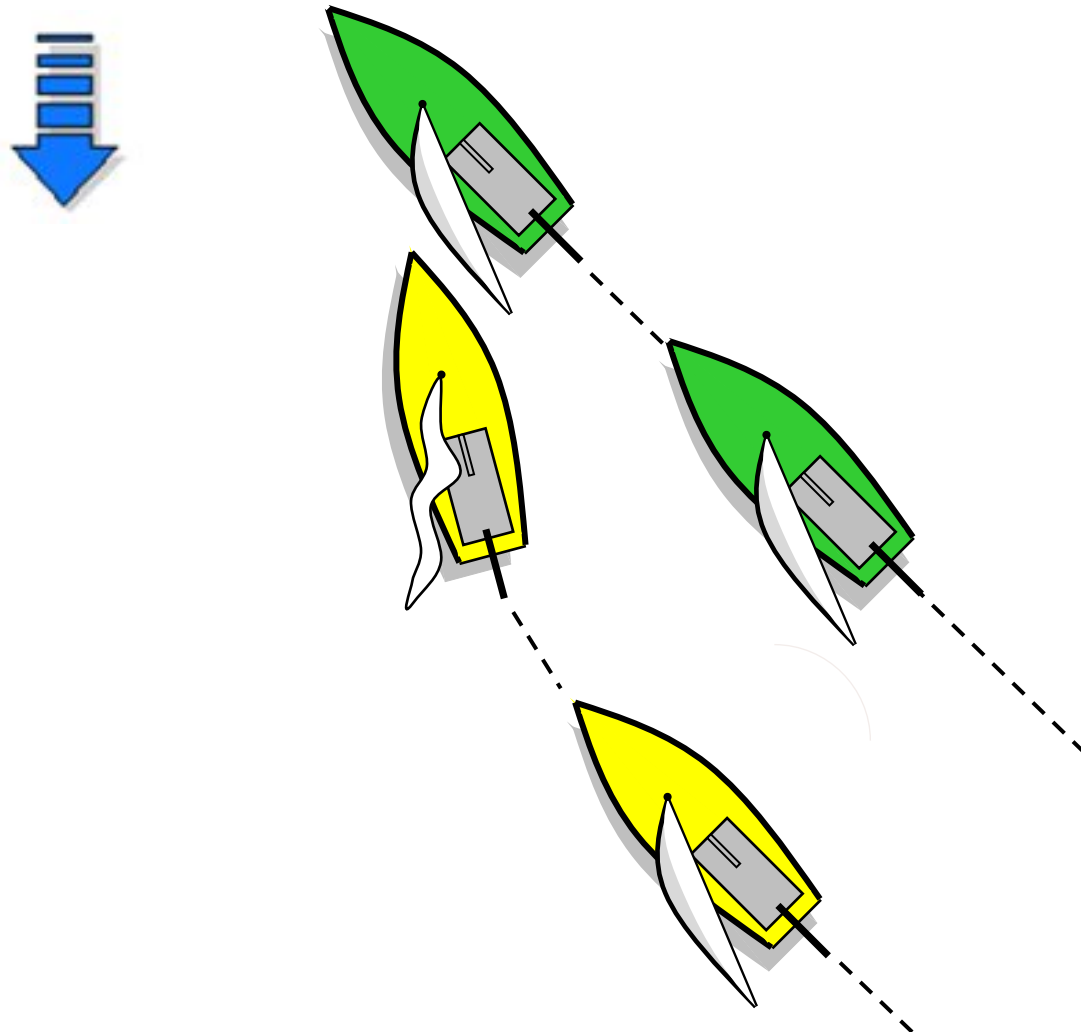


Rule 15: “When a boat acquires right of way, she shall initially give the other boat *room* to keep clear”

In the tacking situation, once you are on a close-hauled course and you become the right of way boat, you then have to give the yellow boat room to keep clear.

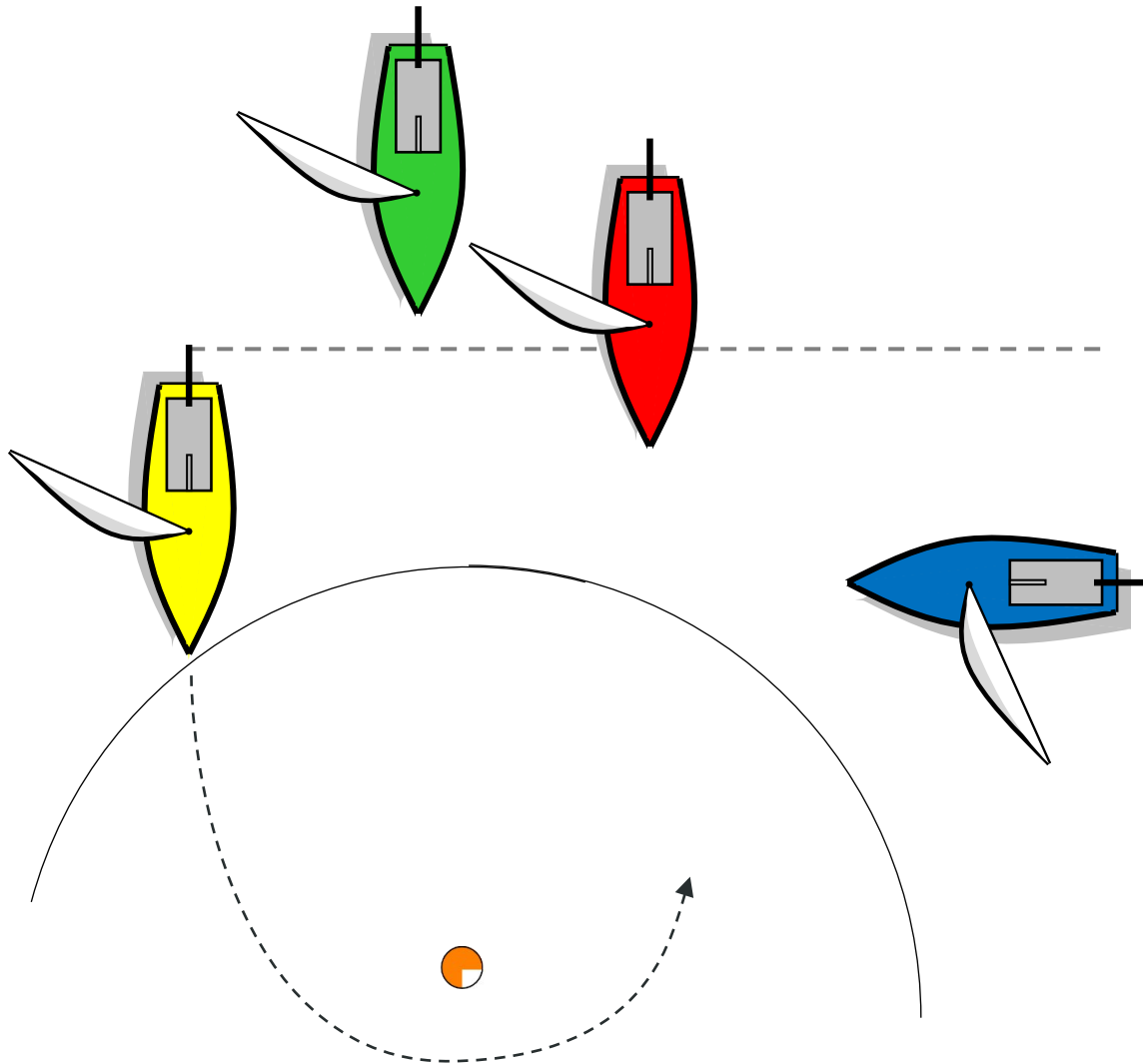
The yellow boat does not have to anticipate what you are going to do, she does not have to take any avoiding action until you are on your close hauled course.

Changing Course



- Rule 16: “When a right-of-way boat changes course, it shall give the other boat *room to keep clear.*”
- The first movement of the green boat in keeping clear would result in their stern moving to leeward and the yellow boat must give room for this action
- In the pre-start, a windward boat that is sitting with sails out, must not just put the helm down, but must also trim their sails in to get under way

Leeward Mark Rounding

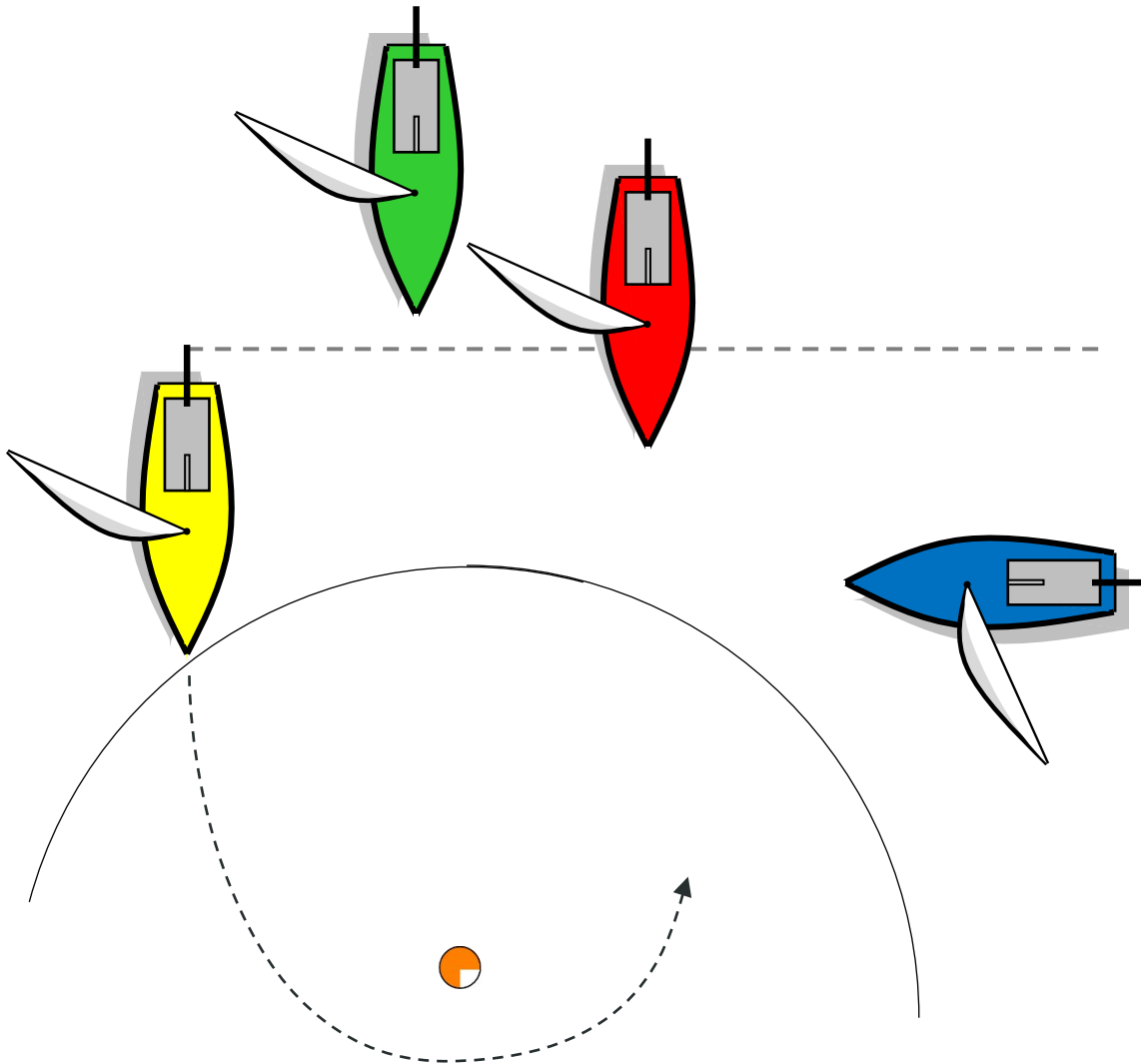


Definition: “**Zone:** The area around a *mark* within a distance of three hull lengths of the boat nearer to it. A boat is in the *zone* when any part of her hull is in the *zone*.”

Rule 18: “When boats are *overlapped* (at the zone) the outside boat shall give the inside boat *mark-room*”

Port/starboard and Windward/Leeward rules do not apply

Leeward Mark Rounding

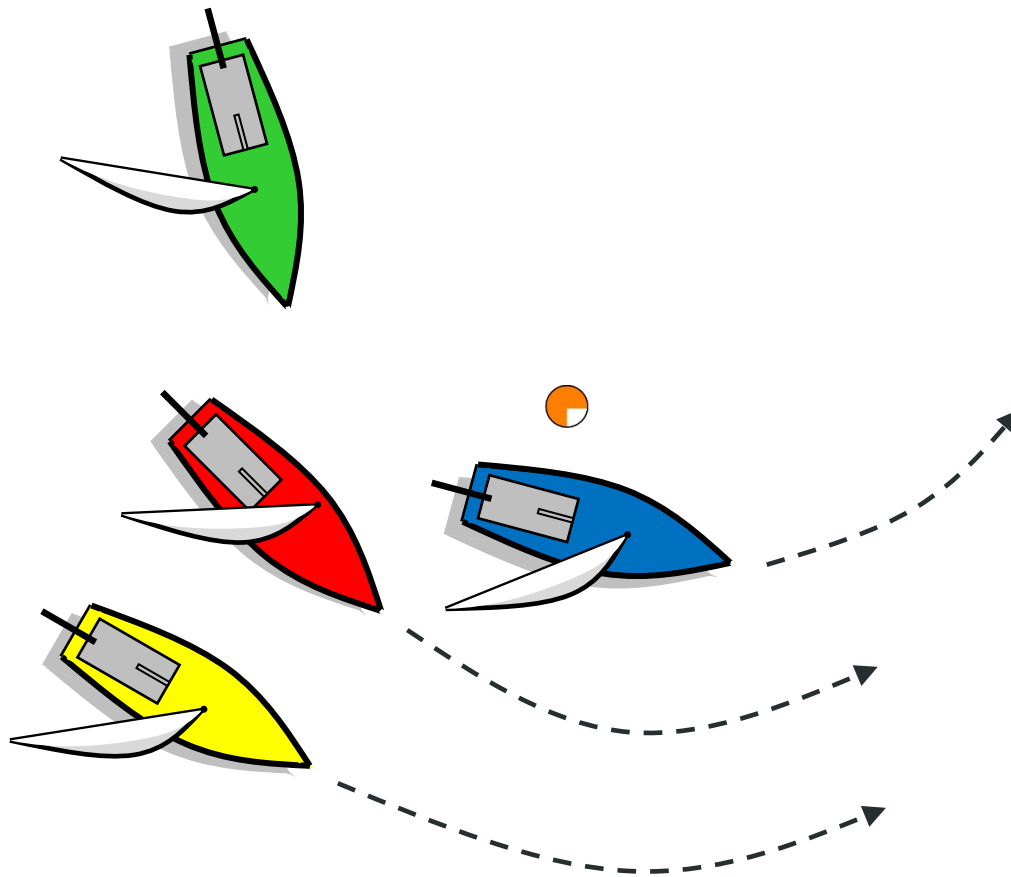


Most common rule in the protest room.

Only rule where there is an onus of proof.

Rule 18.2(e): “If there is reasonable doubt that a boat obtained or broke an overlap in time, it shall be presumed that she did not”

Leeward Mark Rounding

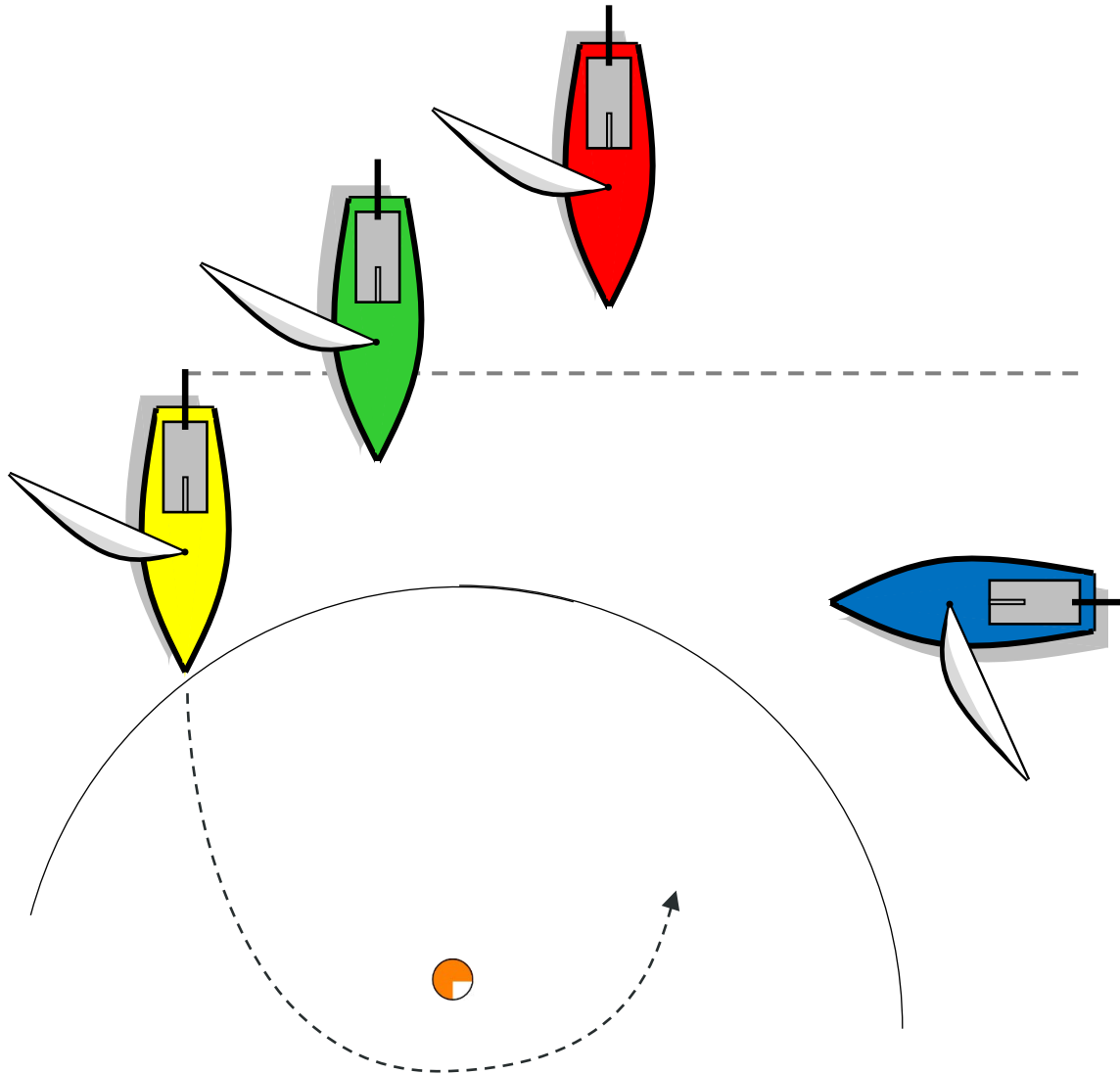


Probably the trickiest rule as there are no lines on the “court” to judge the three boat lengths

One of the few rules where it is highly recommended to call “room” if you think you are entitled to room, or “no room” if you think other boats are not entitled.

Do not take risks on mark roundings. If someone calls “room” on you, give them room and discuss in the bar later, or protest

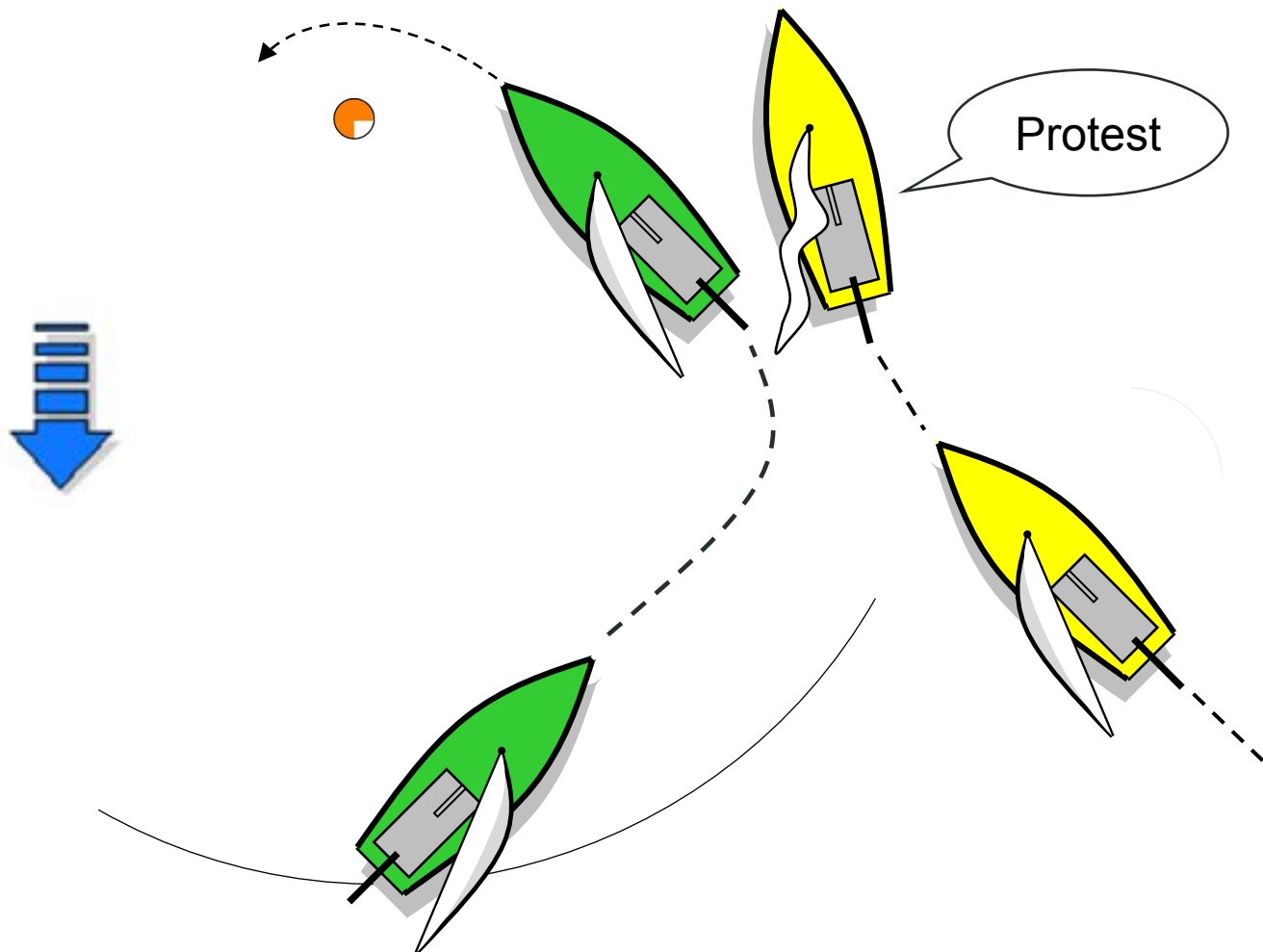
Leeward Mark Rounding – intervening boat



Definition: Clear Astern, Clear Ahead,
Overlap: “.... they also overlap when
a boat between them overlaps both”

In this situation, yellow is overlapped
on green and red and must give room
to both as well as blue

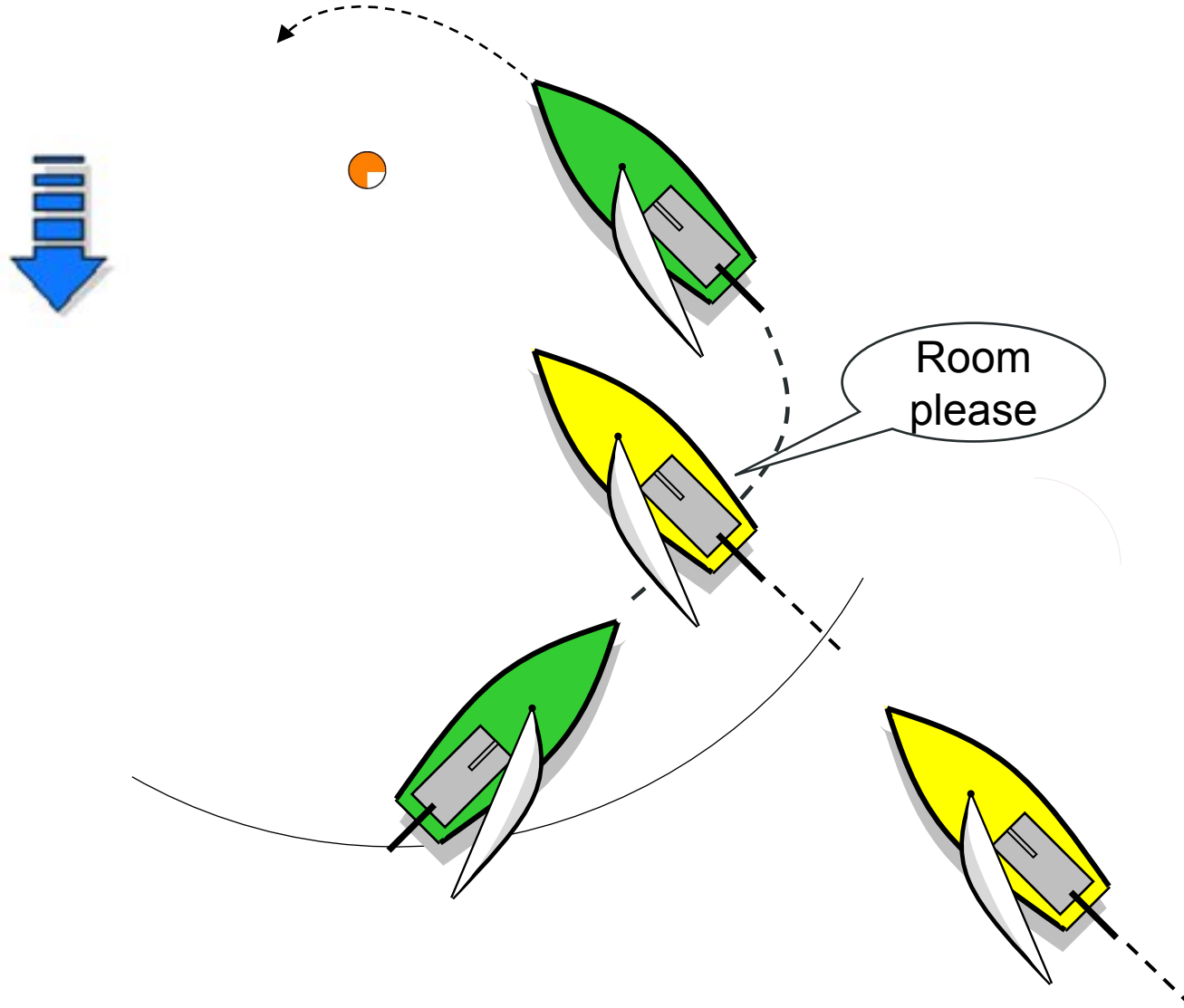
Windward Mark Rounding



Rule 18.3 “If a boat in the zone of a *mark* to be left to port passes head to wind from *port* to *starboard tack* it shall not cause a boat that has been on *starboard tack* to sail above close-hauled”

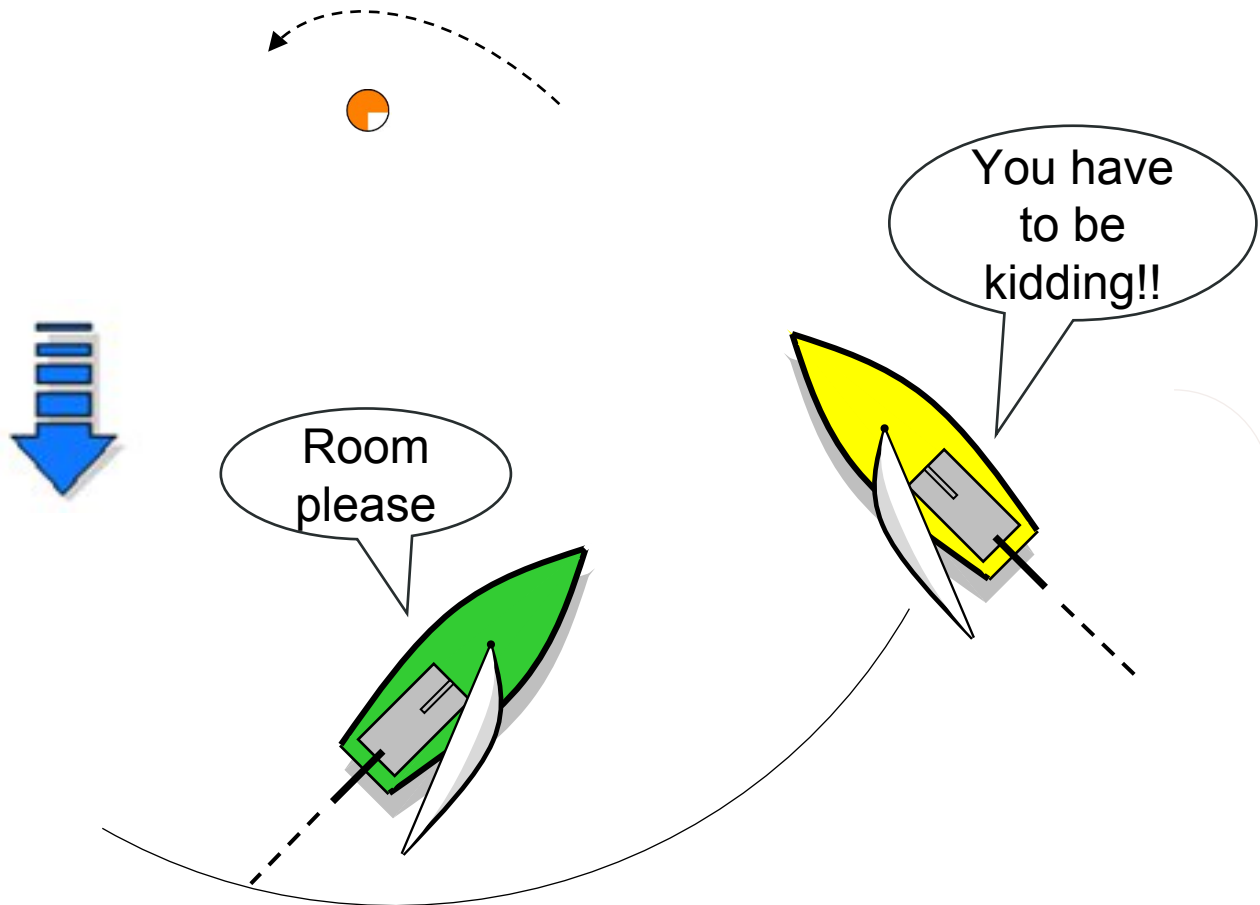
Cannot emphasis enough “to sail above close-hauled”, not just “alter course”

Windward Mark Rounding



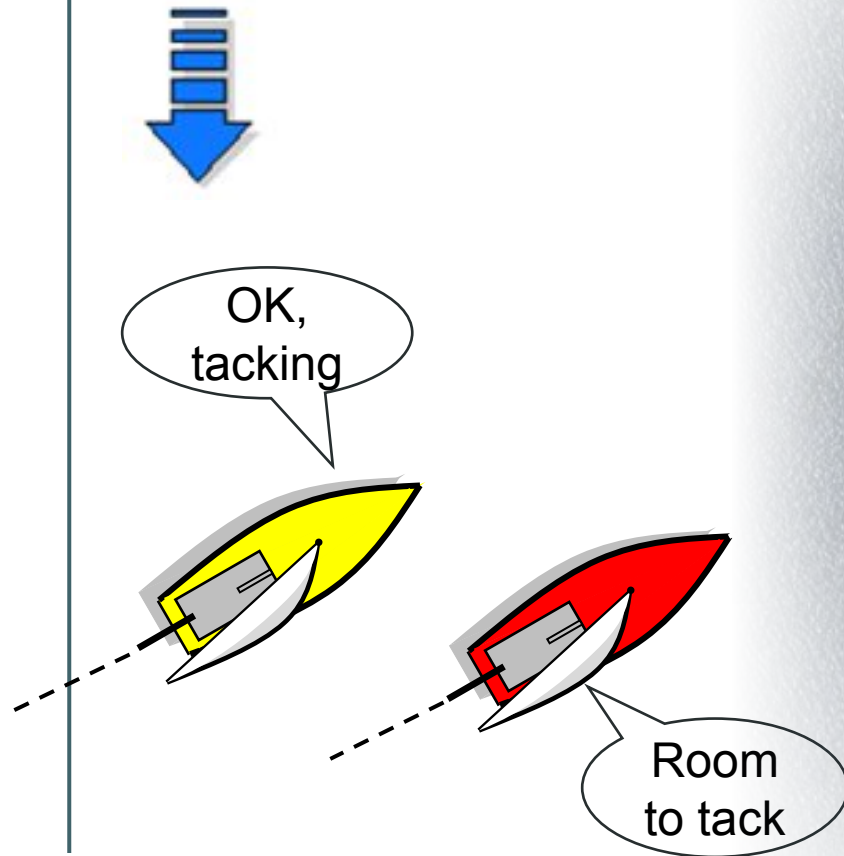
- Rule 18.3 “If a boat in the zone of a *mark* to be left to port passes head to wind from *port* to *starboard tack* it shall give *mark-room* if that boat becomes overlapped inside it.”

Windward Mark Rounding



- Rule 18: Mark room "... does not apply between boats on opposite *tacks* on a beat to windward"

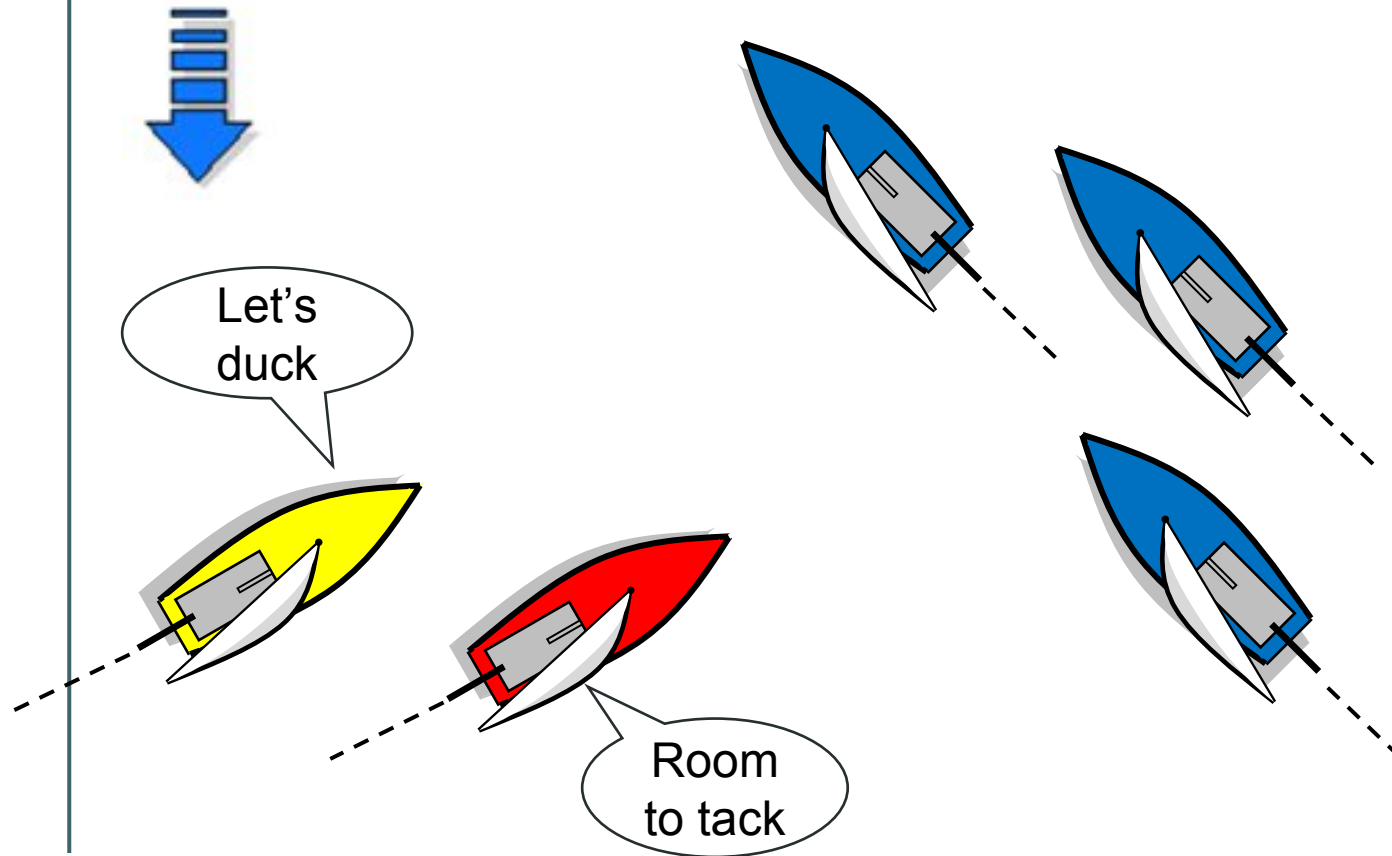
Room to Tack at an Obstruction



Middle Brighton Pier
Scenic pier with skyline views

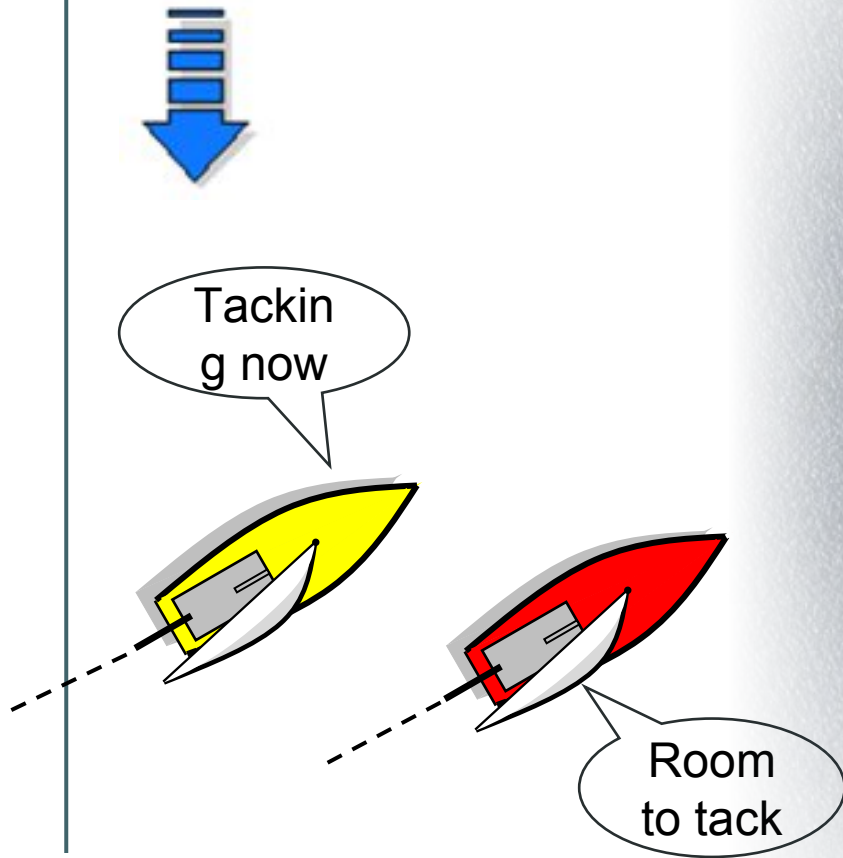
- Rule 20.1 Hailing: “A boat may hail for room to tack by hailing “Room to tack”
- Rule 20.2 Responding: “... shall respond by either tacking ... or replying “you tack” and then giving room”
- Rule 20.2(b) “A hailed boat shall respond even if the hail breaks rule 20.1” (ie not a valid hail).
- The yellow boat’s only recourse is to protest
- Rule change in 2025 that it has to be the words “Room to tack”

Room to Tack at a line of give way boats



- Who gets to choose?
- Definition: Obstruction - An object that a boat could not pass without changing course substantially a boat *racing* is not an *obstruction* to other boats unless they are required to *keep clear* of it
- Rule 19.2(a) "A right-of-way boat may choose to pass an *obstruction* on either side."
- The red boat is the right of way boat as yellow is required to keep clear as the windward boat, and therefore gets to choose

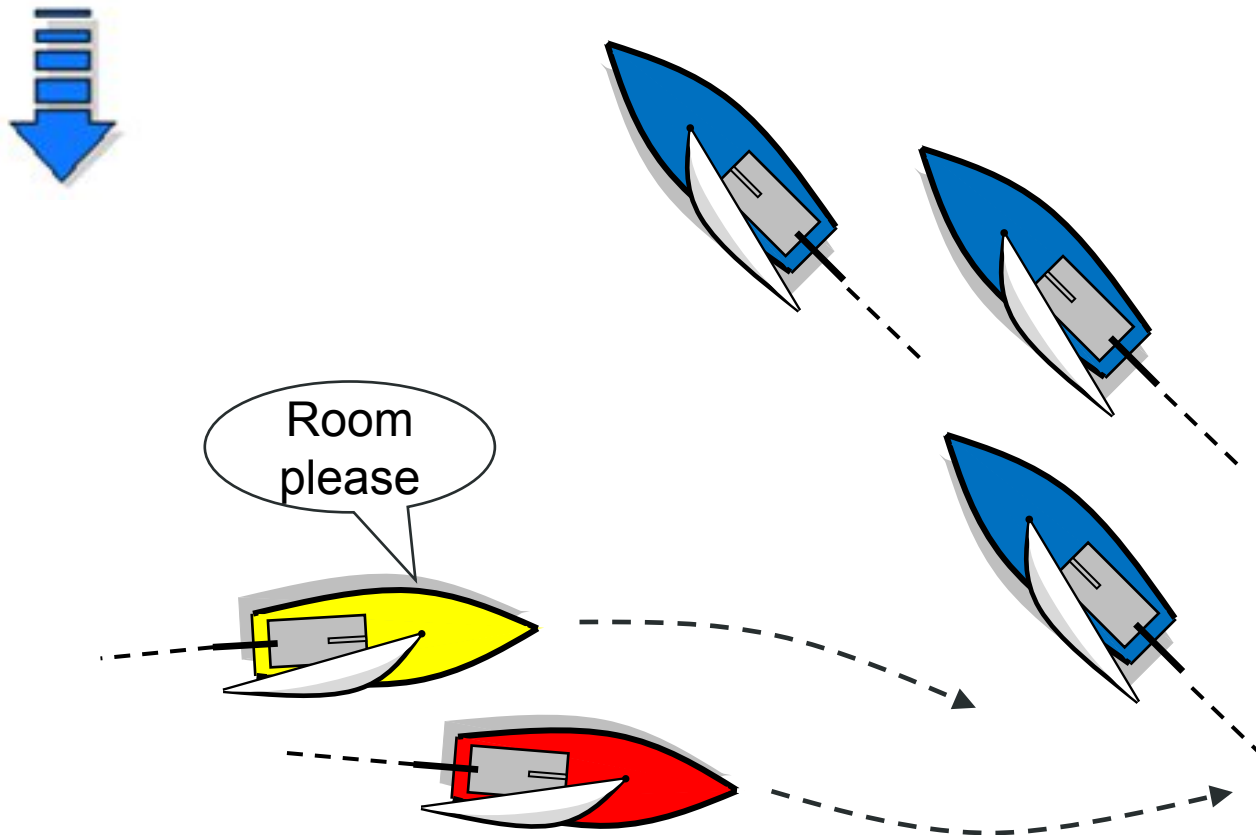
Room to Tack at a line of give way boats



- Having decided to tack, the rules are exactly the same as the previous example of avoiding an obstruction

Middle Brighton Pier
Scenic pier with skyline views

Room to Tack at a line of give way boats



If red decides to duck, then she must give yellow room to clear the obstruction

Rule 19.2(b) “When boats are *overlapped*, the outside boat shall give the inside boat *room* between it and the *obstruction*”

A few other rules

Rule 21.1 “A boat sailing towards the pre-start side of the line to comply with rule 30.1 (OCS) shall keep clear until her hull is completely on the pre-start side of the line”.

Rule 21.2: “A boat taking a penalty shall keep clear of one that is not.”

Rule 23.2 “If reasonably possible, a boat shall not interfere with a boat that is taking a penalty this rule does not apply when the boat is sailing its *proper course*.”

Rule 21.3: “A boat moving astern, or sideways to windward, through the water by backing a sail shall *keep clear* of one that is not.”

Protests – an overview



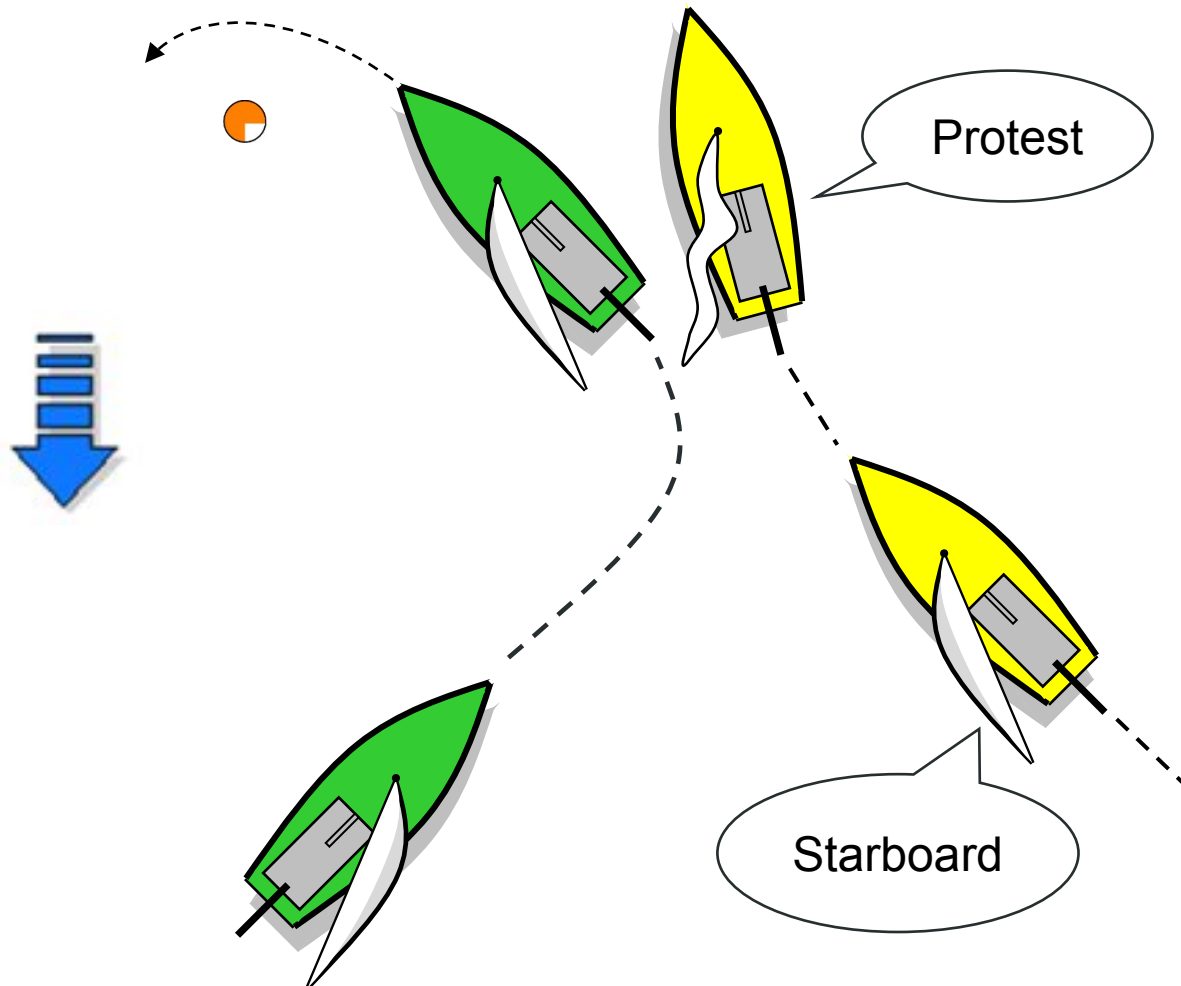
To be successful when protesting:

- Know your rules
- Have protest flag in an easily accessible location on your boat
- Treat every close encounter as if it will end up in the protest room
- Hail “protest” ***immediately***
- Fly your protest flag at the first reasonable opportunity
- Fill in the protest form and submit on time
- Arrange witnesses
- Attend arbitration if available
- Attend protest hearing

Have protest flag in an accessible location

- You must fly your protest flag at the first reasonable opportunity
- This does not mean “send someone below to go and look for it”
- Have it on your backstay behind the skipper is the usual location
- Flag is only required if the boat is over 6m in length

Treat every close encounter as if it will end up in the protest room



- See the situation developing in advance
- Hail in advance if necessary to strengthen your case
- Gather all information about distances, times, potential witnesses
- What information would be useful?
 - Was the green boat's tack completed inside the zone?
 - What was the closest distance between the two boats?
 - Did the yellow boat actually go above close hauled or just alter course?

Hail “protest” immediately

- Takes no time or effort
- Call sail number or point to the offending boat if you have eye contact
- No need for any other words
- This is not required if there is injury or serious damage
- For a boat not sailing the course, or the boat is too far away to hail, you must inform the boat at the first reasonable opportunity, generally as soon as you come ashore

Fill in the protest form and submit on time

- Do not try and write War and Peace
 - It is effectively a charge sheet – provide enough information so that the other boat can identify the incident and prepare their defence. The protest committee does not use any information from the protest form to make a decision.
- The protest must be in writing, but does not have to be on any “official” protest form
- The form **must** identify the protestor, the protestee, and the incident (including the location). All other information is optional, so do not waste time with anything else, e.g.
 - “In race 2 on the second windward leg, 50m from the top mark, I was on starboard tack, 1532 was on port tack. When we were about 3 boats apart I hailed “starboard”, they held their course and I had to do a crash tack to avoid a collision”
- **20%-30% of protests are declared invalid due to**
 - ***failure to hail in a timely manner***
 - ***fly a flag in a timely manner***
 - ***submit the form within the time limit***

Arbitration

- A mini hearing that takes place with one PC member, one person from each boat, and no witnesses
- Only available if stated in the NOR
- At the end of the hearing, the PC member will provide one of the following judgements
 - “If this was to go to protest, I believe that the protestor/protestor will be found to have broken a rule”
 - “I don’t believe that any rule has been broken”
 - “This is too complex to make a ruling, we should take this to a hearing”

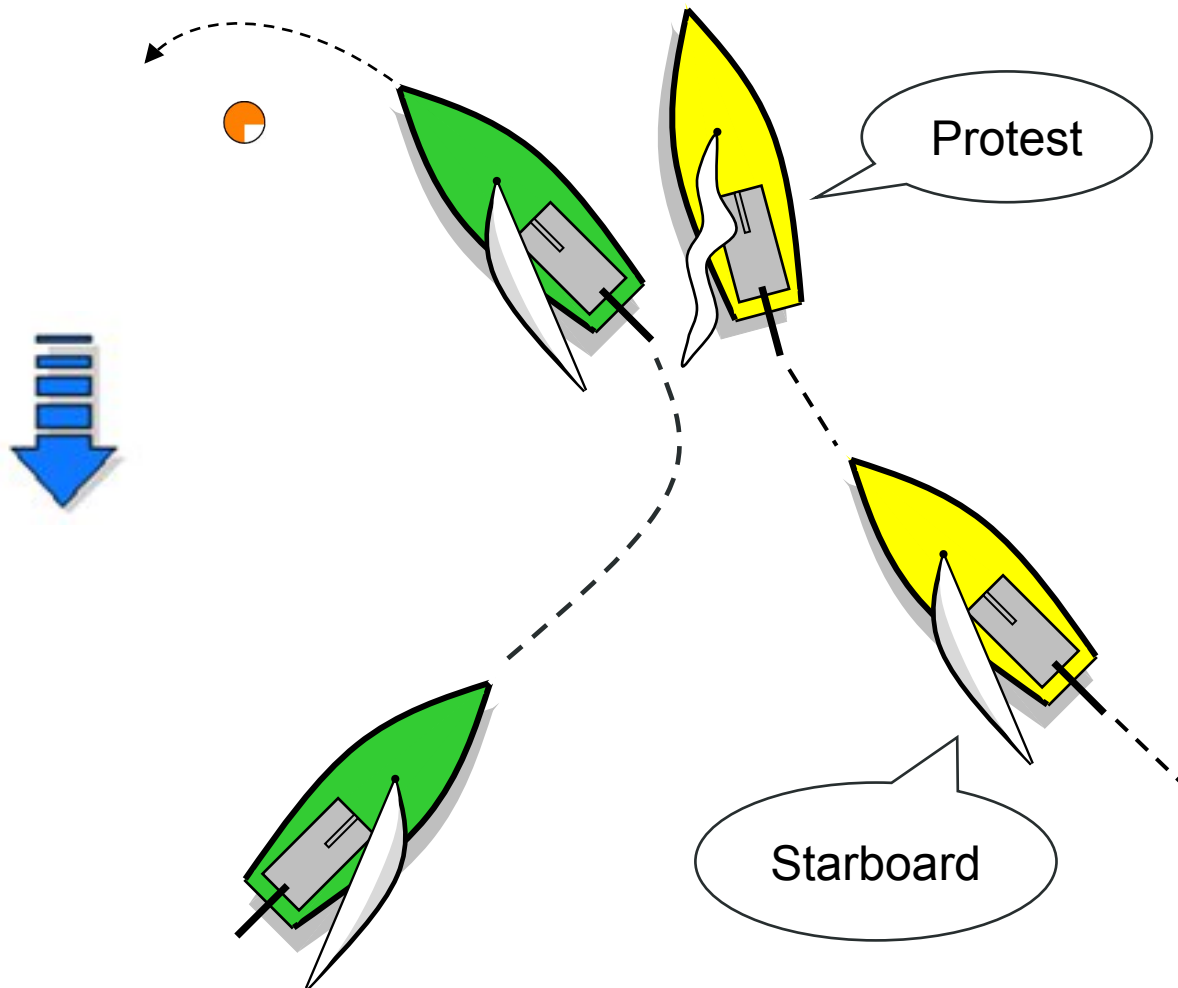
Arbitration

- At this point, either party can choose to take a post race penalty, which is usually 30% of the score for a DNF
- If no party wishes to take a penalty, either party can request that the incident goes to a full hearing
- The scoring penalty can be accepted right up until the start of the full protest hearing if one is called
- It is generally better to accept the penalty than risk a DSQ at the full hearing as very few arbitration decisions are overturned by a full hearing
- If you accept the penalty the other party may request it still goes to a full hearing, but this is a waste of time as if you are also found guilty by the full panel, you cannot be further penalised as you have already taken an appropriate penalty

Arrange witnesses

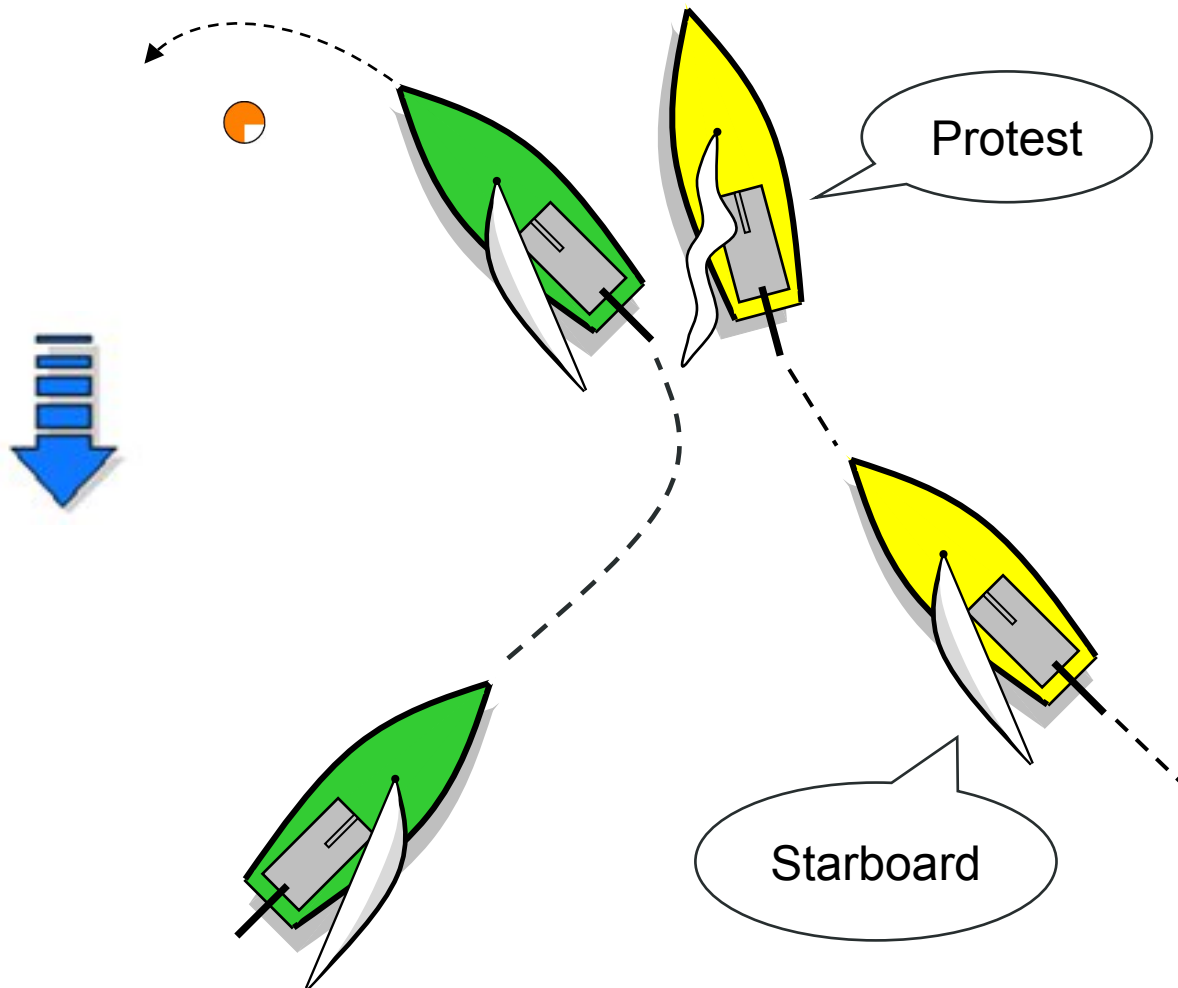
- It is your responsibility to arrange your own witnesses
 - At the time identify boats that might have seen the incident
 - Prior to the hearing, ask the witness the same questions you will ask in the hearing (“never ask a question if you don’t know the answer”)
- If there was a RC nearby, ask if anyone on the boat saw the incident and ask them the same questions
- If you are supplying video evidence it is up to you to provide the equipment. Strongly recommend having the files on a PC where it is more easily viewable than on a phone
- Have your witnesses wait outside the Protest room, ready to come in
- Independent witnesses carry more weight than your own crew

Example of a perfect witness (even if your own crew)



- The witness is a crew member on the yellow keelboat. Their statement:
- “I was on the rail and couldn’t see the green boat but I heard our tactician yelling so I knew there was a boat trying to tack too close. So I kept watching our headsail and when I felt the boat alter course to windward I saw about one metre of our headsail luffing”

Example of a perfect witness (even if your own crew)



- A second member of your crew. Their statement:
- “I’m the port headsail trimmer. I was on the leeward side standing ready to ease the headsail for the rounding. As we altered course to windward, our boat was already heeled over heaps and their stern was at the closest point to us less than two metres away from me in big seas. At that stage they were heeled over heaps as well to the point where I couldn’t see any of their crew.”

The protest hearing

- Three stages
 - Validity
 - Is this a protest valid?
 - Taking evidence
 - The longest part. Statements, questioning, witnesses
 - Summing up
 - “In my opinion you should find in our favour because”

Validity

- Is this a protest valid?
 - “How did you notify the other boat?” (i.e. did you hail?)
 - “How long after the incident did you fly your flag?”
 - What was the protest cutoff time and when was it lodged?
 - Does the form contain the required information
- The PC will then confer and decide if the protest will proceed
- If they agree that it is a valid protest, there is no need to make any further reference to this part of the process
 - i.e. sometimes the person being protested will continue later in the protests “I didn’t hear the call, I didn’t see the flag”, but this is now irrelevant and just annoys the protest committee members

Taking evidence

- Protestor makes a statement
- Protestee makes a statement
- Both parties question each other's statements.
 - Questions of the other person, not further statements from yourself
 - Do not use leading questions
 - e.g. "How far apart were the boats?" and not "would you agree that the boats were two metres apart?"
- Questions of boat parties by the PC
- Witnesses from both parties
 - Party bringing the witness questions the witness
 - Other party questions the witness, then PC questions the witness

Taking evidence

- Protest Committee will put whatever weight on the evidence that they believe it warrants
 - Was the person independent?
 - Were they in a good position to see the incident?
 - Were they doing other tasks at the same time?
 - Did they just repeat the same evidence presented by another witness?
 - Were they credible, i.e. were they positive about their evidence, or did they contradict previous evidence
 - Were the photos, video from an angle that provided relevant information
 - Long/short lenses can make photographic evidence unreliable, but also can be invaluable

Taking evidence - advice

- Identify the key moment in the incident, be aware that the other party may bring up a different rule
- Decide what information you need to prove and question appropriately to back up these points
 - The other boat's tack was completed inside the zone
 - We had to alter course to avoid contact
 - We sailed above close hauled
- Of your own witnesses – never ask a question if you don't the answer (Perry Mason, The Good Wife, et al)
- Discrediting the opposition's witnesses/testimony
 - Were they in a position to see the incident?
 - Were they doing other tasks at the same time?
 - e.g. did the foredeck have his head down doing a spinnaker drop at the time
 - Take notes if their witnesses contradict themselves or each other, don't point this out just yet
- Don't bother quoting rules at this stage, just facts on distances, angles of boats, timings etc
- Identify any key points where both parties agree, and note them down
 - e.g. "The green boat stated that they started their tack at three and a half boat lengths from the mark"

Summing up

- “In my opinion you should find in our favour because”
- Identify key points of strength from your testimony and your witnesses
- Concentrate on the facts around the key moment
 - “As both parties agree, the tack started at three and half boat lengths from the mark, therefore it must have been completed inside the zone”
 - “Our crew member was in the perfect position to view the distances between the boats at less than 2 metres”
- Try to discredit their testimony
 - “The two witnesses for the other boat gave completely different assessments of the distances between the boats, which I believe was due to their position on the boat making it difficult to have a clear view” (by not pointing this out earlier, you have removed their ability for further clarification by the witness)
- Finish up with the rules applicable
 - “Therefore, I believe that the green boat has broken rule 18.3(a) in that we had to sail above close hauled to avoid contact and as supported by World Sailing Case number XXX”.

General Advice

- Say as little as possible.
 - The more you waffle, the more you run the risk of contradicting your own testimony.
- Stick to the facts and leave the application of rules to the PC, except right at the end of your summing up
- Don't say "you're lying".
 - Evidence may be contradictory but generally because people view from a different angle, or at a slightly different times, or just how bad our brains are at recall. You can say "I disagree with the statement that ..."
- Only take in the number of witnesses you need to support key elements and make sure you ask them all of your own questions, plus what you think the other party may ask.
- Don't interrupt others giving testimony, be polite and never lose your cool
 - Remember that Protest Committee members are not only analysing your testimony, but analysing you as a person to gauge the value of your testimony
- Remember that being right on the water doesn't guarantee that you will win your protest. The outcome is based solely on the PC's assessment on you and your witness's presentation in the protest room.
- And most importantly
 - Keep out of the protest room at all costs!

What next?

- Download a copy of the rules from the Australian Sailing website, sailing.org.au
- Print off:
 - Definitions
 - Race Signals (the flags)
 - Part 2
- Avoid contact at all costs
- Avoid protests as much as possible. Judges often come up with rules that you may not have heard of, or may not have realised were applicable
- If you have some disagreement on the water, discuss it in the bar with the other boat or an RBYC race official

Thank you & Good luck

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