

Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule 20.1

A submission from the Royal Yachting Association

Purpose or Objective

To make the hail for room to tack prescribed, similar to 'Protest' and 'You tack'

Proposal

Amend rule 20.1 as follows:

20.1 Hailing

A boat may hail for room to tack and avoid a boat on the same tack **by hailing 'Room to tack'**.
However, she shall not hail unless [...]

Current Position

See above.

Reason

1. A hail for room to tack "*must clearly convey that A requires room to tack*" (WS Case 54). The clearest way to convey that A requires room to tack is for A to hail "Room to tack".
 2. The only other two required hails in the RRS are "Protest" and "You tack" and it is not consistent or logical to require a specific hail in two cases but not the third.
 3. The current situation is that hails are often made that could be intended or interpreted as clearly conveying a requirement to tack, but could also be intended or interpreted as a "courtesy hail", or a deliberate attempt to gain an advantage.
 4. Examples which are unclear re:
 - "I will need room to tack"
 - "We're tacking"
 - "We are getting close to xxxx"
 - "Room"
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5. These hails put the hailed boat in a difficult position. Should they:
 - (a) Respond by tacking and hope that the hailing boat acts accordingly? If the hailing boat does not then tack as soon as possible the hailed boat will need to prove in a protest that the hail clearly conveyed a need to tack.
 - (b) Respond by hailing "you tack"? If the hailing boat does not then tack as soon as possible, the hailed boat is vulnerable to a subsequent tack from the hailing boat with no warning.
 - (c) Wait for more clarification and hope that the hailing boat is not in a vulnerable situation?
 - (d) Request clarification and hope that there is time to get it?
 6. None of these options are consistent with fair and safe racing
 7. The RYA is aware there is an argument that placing a requirement for a specific hail on the hailing boat could create a dangerous situation, however it does not agree with this:
 - (a) If neither boat is familiar with rule 20, the process is very likely to be flawed at some point anyway
 - (b) Rule 14 exists to avoid such dangerous situations. It requires an incorrectly hailed boat to keep a look out and respond to attempt to avoid a collision if necessary, whatever the hail.
 - (c) 20.2(b) requires that the hailed boat responds even if the hail breaks 20.1. If 20.1 included the requirement of a specific hail, the hailed boat would be required to respond even if the hailing boat broke rule 20 by making an invalid hail.
 - (d) The only change in meaning would be that the hailing boat would have to demonstrate that they hailed "room to tack" to show they complied rather than the hailed yacht demonstrate that the hail did not convey a requirement to tack to show that they did not comply.
 8. We should not attempt to write rules in the hope that competitors who do not read them might follow them anyway. We should write rules that are clear, consistent, and as fair as possible to all.
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