

Racing Rules of Sailing

Revised Case 145

A submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee

Purpose or Objective

To revise Case 145, which has been ‘withdrawn for revision’.

Proposal

Add the following revised version of Case 145 to *The Case Book for 2025-2028*:

Case 145

Definitions, Finish

Definitions, Sail the Course

Rule 28.1, Sailing the Course

A boat’s string, described in the definition Sail the Course, when drawn taut, is only [constrained] [influenced] by the marks that begin, end or bound each leg of the course.

Question 1:

Must the string described in the definition Sail the Course, when drawn taut, lie in navigable water only?

Answer 1:

No. A boat’s track cannot pass over land or through waters that are not navigable; however the string that represents that track has a requirement to be ‘drawn taut’. This is a test used to determine whether or not a boat has sailed the course. When the string is drawn taut, or pulled tight, the imaginary string is only influenced, constrained or ‘caught’ by the marks that begin, bound or end each leg of the course established and described by the race committee. Islands, headlands, shallow water or other non-navigable water do not influence, constrain or ‘catch’ the taut string.

Example 1:

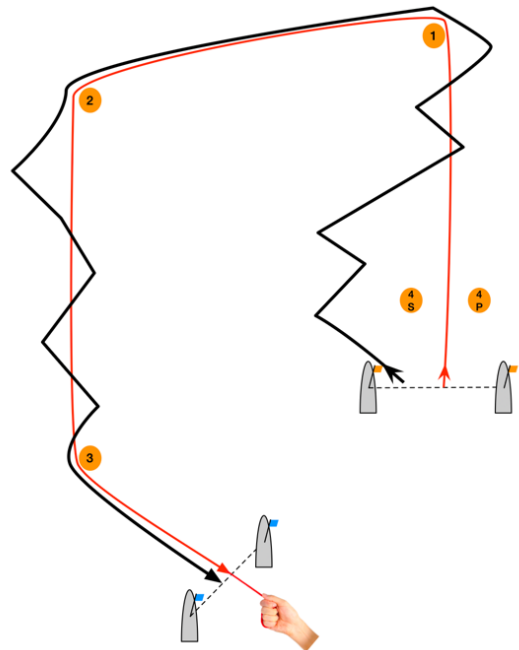
The course described in the sailing instructions is in a trapezoid layout and the particular course described for a race is:

Start – Mark 1 – Mark 2 – Mark 3 – Finish.

Leave rounding marks 1, 2 and 3 to port.

The black line in the diagram represents a boat's track and the red line represents the taut string described in the definition Sail the Course.

On the first leg, while the track of the boat left gate marks 4S and 4P to starboard, the string, when drawn taut is not influenced by those two gate marks because those marks do not begin, bound or end the first leg of the course and, therefore, they do not have a required side for boats sailing the first leg of the course, from the starting line to Mark 1.

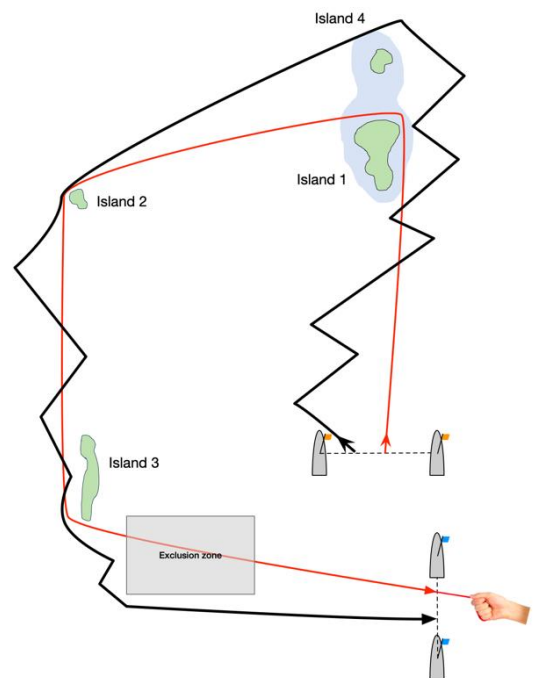
Example 2:

The course described in the sailing instructions is around islands and the particular course is described as: Start – Island 1 – Island 2 – Island 3 – Finish. Leave rounding marks 1, 2 and 3 to port.

Separately, an exclusion zone was described in the sailing instructions, and a rule in the sailing instructions prohibited boats from entering that zone.

The black line represents the boat's track and the red line represents the taut string described in the definition Sail the Course.

A boat may choose, or be compelled due to non-navigable water between Islands 1 and 4, to round both Island 1 and Island 4. Because Island 4 is not a mark that begins, bounds or ends legs 1 or 2, the string is not influenced by Island 4, and when it is drawn taut it touches Island 1, but not Island 4.



The rule that prohibits boats from entering the exclusion zone is a separate rule from the rule that establishes the course. Therefore, 'the taut string test' is not used to determine whether or not a boat broke the rule that prohibited her from entering the exclusion zone. That rule permits boats to leave the exclusion zone either to port or to starboard, but they are not permitted to enter it.

It is recommended that race committees establish an exclusion zone in a rule separate from the rule that establishes the course. That will help to make it clear that the 'taut string' test is not used to determine whether a boat has complied with the exclusion zone.

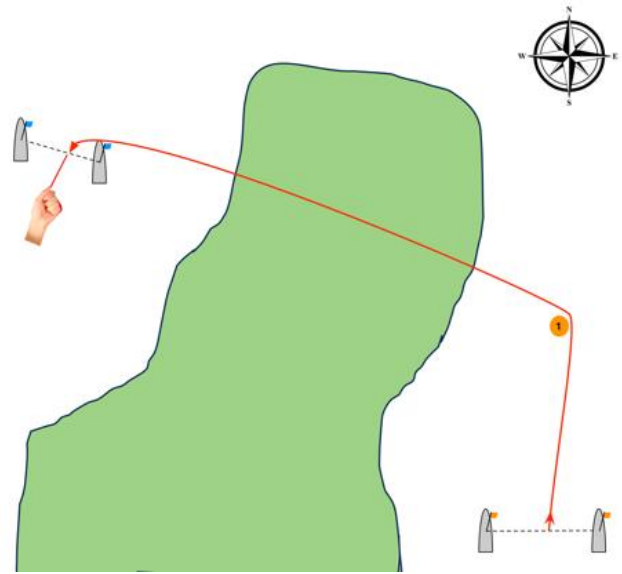
Question 2

A race committee wishes to use the following course: Start on the line to the east of the headland – Leave Mark 1 to port – Finish on the line to the west of the headland. How will boats know the direction in which they are required to cross the starting line and the direction in which they are required to cross the finishing line?

Answer 2

The definition Finish allows a race committee to describe the direction boats are required to cross the finishing line. Therefore, in this example, the sailing instructions should state, 'Boats shall finish be crossing the finishing line from north to south.'

The definition Start does not permit the race committee to specify which side of the starting line is the 'pre-start side.' In this example the race committee should establish a mark on the side of the starting line that it wants boats to treat as the course side of the starting line. The race committee can do this by setting a mark, Mark 1, on the side of the starting line that it wants the boats to treat as 'the course side' and describe the course as: Start – Leave Mark 1 to port – Finish (from north to south). (Note that Mark 1 could be either a mark set by the race committee or a navigation buoy associated with the headland.)

**Question 3**

The definition Obstruction states that 'an area or line that boats are prohibited from entering or crossing' is an Obstruction. The exclusion zone discussed in Question 1, Example 2, is an example of such an area. Would Answer 1 for Example 2 be changed in any way if the exclusion zone were, instead an exclusion line that boats were prohibited from crossing?

Answer 3

No.

Current Position

None. Case 145 is currently 'withdrawn for revision'.

Reasons

The 'string rule', currently in the definition Sail the Course, is old, but mystifying. It is particularly mystifying when islands are used as marks and when boats will encounter exclusion zones or exclusion lines while sailing the course. The proposal's goal is to remove these mysteries.