

Protest Committee Guidelines

2025



FOREWORD

This version of Protest Committee Guidelines is the result of thoughtful contributions over more than a decade from judges and rules experts around the world. Originally it began as a way to enhance consistency at certain high-level regattas with multiple classes and multiple hearing panels working concurrently. Although it started as a compilation of several separate documents, it has subsequently grown into a more unified and focused set of guidelines that are now being applied at a much broader field of events worldwide.

The primary goals of the various sections of this document are to increase 1) the consistency, 2) the transparency, and 3) the understanding of some of the workings of protest committees. It is not, however, a substitute for rules, manuals, regulations, or event documents that govern participants and officials.

Like other documents that help support the application of racing rules and the processes of adjudication in sailing, these guidelines continue to grow and change as the sport and its rules and best practices continue to evolve. Accordingly, the World Sailing International Judges Sub-committee welcomes thoughtful comments and suggestions for improvements; please email them to raceofficials@sailing.org

We hope you find this document helpful, and we look forward to your contributions to improving it.

Andrus Poksi, Chair, International Judges Sub-committee

INTRODUCTION

This document is a guide for the chairs of protest committees. It is designed to help them to set out some of the protocols under which they intend their fellow judges to perform their duties during an event.

Throughout this document the term 'protest committee' refers to a hearing panel of a protest committee, or a hearing panel of an international jury, or the entire committee, as appropriate in context.

Furthermore, following *The Racing Rules of Sailing 2025-2028*, this document uses the words 'chair' and 'vice chair' to identify the leaders of a committee or panel, regardless of gender.

We recommend that chairs follow these guidelines, but they are not mandatory. They have been drafted to accommodate as wide a variety of events as possible, while maintaining consistency.

Where unique circumstances in a specific event require a substantial deviation from these guidelines, a chair may make appropriate modifications. For the sake of enhancing consistency for competitors and support persons across events, we recommend keeping such changes to a minimum.

When appropriate, we encourage chairs to publish the section "Information for Competitors and Support Persons" by posting it on the official notice board. Similarly, we encourage chairs to use the section "Internal Protest Committee Guidelines" to share the event protocols with their fellow judges.

The Redress Guidelines supplement, but do not replace, the rules and cases. They continue to evolve as new event formats develop and grow in popularity.

Protests by the Protest Committee for Incidents Between Boats on the Water

The protest committee will not usually protest for a breach of a rule of Part 2 unless they observe an apparent breach of good sportsmanship (RRS 2). Examples of breaches where the protest committee will consider protesting, include but are not limited to:

- deliberately or knowingly breaking a rule without being exonerated and not taking the appropriate penalty;
- intimidating other boats, often evidenced by unnecessary shouting or foul language directed toward other boats;
- team tactics, sailing to benefit another boat to the detriment of your own position;
- sailing that results in, or is likely to result in, damage or injury or gaining a significant advantage.

Outside Help

A boat that receives instructions or transfers sailing gear with a support vessel after the preparatory signal breaks RRS 41, even if the transfer starts before the preparatory signal.

When support vessels are prohibited from entering the racing area, a boat not racing that needs to receive help must sail to the support vessel outside the racing area, unless she is unable to do so.

Propulsion

The current version of World Sailing Interpretations of Rule 42, Propulsion, can be found in the Online Documents section of the Racing Rules of Sailing page of the World Sailing website at: <https://www.sailing.org/racingrules/>

In addition to the World Sailing Interpretations of Rule 42, Propulsion, the following points may help you to understand the application of RRS 42.

- Although there are usually two judges in each protest committee vessel, a single judge will signal a yellow flag penalty when satisfied that a boat has broken RRS 42.
- Although judges will signal a RRS 42 penalty as soon as possible, this might be after the boat has crossed the finishing line.

A competitor may ask the judges for an explanation of a penalty after the completion of the race. It can be done either on or off the water or by asking at the protest committee office to arrange a brief meeting with the judges involved.

Requests for Redress Claiming an Error by the Race Committee When Scoring a Boat

Competitors sometimes want to question how the race committee has scored them.

The event rules may describe a method and time limit for delivering a scoring inquiry to the race committee. If so, a boat making such an inquiry may follow those rules.

INFORMATION FOR COMPETITORS AND SUPPORT PERSONS

The race committee may arrange to share its evidence with the competitor before responding to the inquiry.

If the competitor is not satisfied with the race committee's answer to the scoring inquiry, the competitor may deliver a request for redress within the relevant time limit of RRS 61.2.

If the event rules do not describe a method and time limit for making a scoring inquiry, then a boat may deliver a request for redress.

In the hearing of such a request for redress, a competitor must provide evidence that the race committee has made an error in scoring a boat. Video evidence or the relative positions of two boats scored differently rarely provides evidence that the race committee has made a scoring error. See RRS 63.5 and World Sailing Case 136 for further information.

Photo, Video, or Tracking Evidence

A party wishing to bring photo, video, or tracking evidence to a hearing is responsible for providing the equipment required to view the evidence. Internet connection may not be generally available during a hearing.

It should be possible for all parties and the panel to view the evidence at the same time.

Publicly available tracking system information (if available) may be presented, but it usually has limited accuracy. The images produced are enhanced from the actual data as an aid to the viewer. The system may be used to get an indicative position or movements of the boats for visualization, but it is usually not sufficiently precise to be used for race management purposes or for hearing panel decisions that require exact positioning information.

Observers at Hearings

Each party may bring one person to observe at a hearing, unless the hearing panel decides in a particular case that it is inappropriate (e.g., for reasons of confidentiality, etc.) or impractical (e.g., the hearing room is not large enough, etc.). Observers must sign and comply with the requirements in the document titled *Information for Observers*.

Use of Electronic Devices During Hearings

The use of electronic devices (e.g., tablets, smartphones, similar devices, etc.) by parties, observers and witnesses to take notes, check rules, cases, etc. may be allowed during the hearings, provided the device is not used to record or communicate with other persons. Before the start of a hearing a member of the hearing panel may check that all these devices are in flight mode with the cellular, WiFi, and Bluetooth radios turned off.

RRS 69

Any form of cheating, including not telling the truth in a hearing, is a breach of sportsmanship and may result in a hearing under RRS 69.

Questions on Protest Committee Procedure and Policy

Competitors and support persons may submit questions in writing or discuss procedure and policy with the protest committee chair. The chair will usually be available near the protest committee rooms during protest time or can be contacted through the race or protest committee offices.

INTERNAL PROTEST COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

Answering Questions

It is always preferable to be with another race official when answering questions.

When accompanied by another judge, the primary conversation should be between one of the judges and the competitor. The second judge will observe the discussion, and may help calm down the situation as needed, but not try to explain.

Avoid conversations with competitors or support persons in private.

Ashore

Judges may answer questions on the application of racing rules that do not involve a protest. However, questions that involve an interpretation of a rule that applies at the event should be submitted to the protest committee in writing.

Afloat

Judges may explain their rule 42 penalties and medal race calls with competitors. If such a conversation becomes lengthy or heated, ask the competitor(s) to come to the protest committee office to finish the conversation. If possible, talk to the competitor in English.

Protests from the Committee and Observations on the Water

See also: "Information for Competitors and Support Persons."

The protest committee usually will not protest for breaches of a rule of Part 2, unless they observe an apparent breach of good sportsmanship (RRS 2). The primary obligation to follow and enforce the rules lies with the competitors, when a boat has the opportunity to take a voluntary penalty on the water (or to retire), or to make a report to the protest committee under rule 64.

It is important for a protest committee to be as consistent as possible during an event. Accordingly, the protest committee chair may require that judges promptly notify the chair or vice chair of any grounds for a protest by the committee against a boat. Then, a decision can be made about whether or not to lodge a protest.

The committee's intention to protest for such an incident must be posted before the protest time limit expires, and the protest must be lodged within this time limit, too. However, the time limit may be extended if the judge cannot return to shore in time. If the judge is detained afloat, the basic information should be transmitted ashore if possible so the committee can post the notice of intent to protest.

A judge having information that may make him or her a knowledgeable witness in an incident will take notes and avoid a discussion of the incident with any other judge, except to decide if a protest by the committee is appropriate.

A judge who witnesses an incident on the water that goes to a hearing will notify the race officials' secretary (or protest committee chair or vice chair, as appropriate) of the race number, leg, location, and boats involved.

Managing Observers at Hearings, Subject to Venue Restrictions

In general, the policy is to allow observers in hearings. However, the size and seating arrangement may limit the number of observers invited. In this case, seats will be filled in this order:

1. one (1) observer nominated by each party;
2. one (1) media pool representative;
3. any other competitors or their representatives (one per competitor), unless there is insufficient space to accommodate all requesting a seat, in which case, none will be allowed;
4. event technical officials wishing to observe, as space allows; and
5. additional media representatives, as space allows.

Observers must sign and comply with the requirements in "Information for Observers." The panel chair should remind observers of these requirements and expectations of behavior for observers.

Permission to Withdraw a Protest or Hearing Request

A competitor may ask that the protest committee allow the competitor to withdraw a protest or hearing request that they have already delivered. Allowing that protest or hearing request to be withdrawn is a decision reserved to the protest committee (see rule 63.2(a)). It does not require a hearing.

The protest committee chair may appoint one or more members to make that decision. If a person making such a decision is in doubt or has concerns about consistency across the event, they may refer the decision to a full panel for consideration. If the panel has similar doubts or concerns, consult the protest committee chair or vice chair.

It is a competitor's decision to deliver a protest or hearing request, or to ask that it be withdrawn. The protest committee should determine why it is being withdrawn. Permission to withdraw the protest or hearing request should not be given when the protest committee suspects that:

- damage or injury may be involved;
- the protestor is being coerced; and/or
- the boat protesting has realized she may have broken a rule and is attempting to avoid a penalty.

In some of these cases, the protestor may be breaking rule 2 Fair Sailing.

General Recommendations and Limitations

A boat given redress should be scored in a finishing position when there is a high likelihood that the boat would have finished in that position. This is most likely to occur when the incident occurs late in the race or after the boat has finished.

In other cases, average points would be appropriate.

In all cases in which average points will be awarded to a boat that has a finishing position, add 'but no worse than N' (where N is the boat's finishing position).

In any redress case, a boat should only be granted redress within the following limit from World Sailing Case 116, Answer 2: "When giving redress, the protest committee should ensure that fewer than half of a boat's race scores included in her series score, after any exclusion(s), are based on average points."

Consulting the Protest Committee Chair or Vice Chair

A protest committee chair at an event may require, if it is practicable, that a hearing panel consult with the chair or vice chair (even if the hearing has been started):

- when the panel realizes that the possible outcome of a redress hearing might affect the finishing positions of a large proportion of the fleet;
- before deciding the appropriate redress arrangement for one or more boats, in order to enhance consistency across redress decisions; and
- to report delivered redress decisions as soon as possible.

Recommended Methods for Calculating Average Points

When the hearing concerns any race of an opening OR qualifying OR split-fleet OR final series, for redress in any race...

...before the last day of the series:

award average points in accordance with rule A9(b) replacing 'in all the races before the race in question' with 'in all the races from A through B except the race in question' (where A is the first day of the opening OR qualifying OR split-fleet OR final series and B is either the day before the last scheduled day of the opening OR qualifying OR split-fleet OR final series, or B is the last scheduled day of the opening OR qualifying OR split-fleet OR final series).

...on the last day of the series:

award average points in accordance with rule A9(a) replacing 'in all the races in the series' with 'in all the races in the opening OR qualifying OR split-fleet OR final series'.

When the hearing concerns an iQFOiL event...

...slalom racing will count as a series for the purpose of WS Case 116. When the hearing concerns any race in a slalom racing series, for redress in any race of the series:

REDRESS GUIDELINES

award average points in accordance with rule A9(b) replacing 'in all the races before the race in question' with 'in all races from A through B except the race in question' (where A is the first day of the slalom racing series and B is either the day before the last scheduled day of the slalom racing series, or B is the last scheduled day of the slalom racing series).

Results from sprint racing or course/marathon racing series ***should not be included*** in this calculation.

...sprint racing (including sprint slalom and upwind sprint racing) will count as a series for the purpose of WS Case 116. When the hearing concerns any race in a sprint racing series, for redress in any race of the series:

award average points in accordance with rule A9(b) replacing 'in all the races before the race in question' with 'in all races from A through B except the race in question' (where A is the first day of the sprint racing series and B is either the day before the last scheduled day of the sprint racing series, or B is the last scheduled day of the sprint racing series).

Results from slalom racing or course/marathon racing series ***should not be included*** in this calculation.

...course racing and marathon racing will together count as a series for the purpose of WS Case 116. When the hearing concerns any race in a course racing and/or marathon racing series, for redress in any race of the series:

award average points in accordance with rule A9(b) replacing 'in all the races before the race in question' with 'in all the races from A through B except the race in question' (where A is the first day of the course/marathon racing series and B is either the day before the last scheduled day of the course/marathon racing series, or B is the last scheduled day of the course/marathon racing series).

Results from slalom racing or sprint racing series ***should not be included*** in this calculation.



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