

**Racing Rules Committee**

Rule 17

A submission from US Sailing

Purpose or Objective

To limit the application of rule 17 so that it does not apply in situations in which the leeward boat sails above her proper course, but does not cause the windward boat to change course. Also, to remove an ambiguity resulting from the use of the word 'above'.

Proposal

Change rule 17 as follows:

**17 ON THE SAME TACK; PROPER COURSE**

If a boat *clear astern* becomes *overlapped* within two of her hull lengths to *leeward* of a boat on the same *tack*, ~~then she shall not sail above her proper course~~ while they remain on the same *tack* and *overlapped* within that distance

**(a) the leeward boat shall not sail above her proper course if doing so causes the windward boat to change course to keep clear, and**

**(b) the leeward boat shall gybe when her proper course is to gybe.**

~~, unless in doing so she promptly sails astern of the other boat.~~ This rule does not apply if the *overlap* begins while the *windward* boat is required by rule 13 to *keep clear*.

Current Position

As above.

Clean Copy of Rule 17 if the Proposal is Approved

**17 ON THE SAME TACK; PROPER COURSE**

If a boat *clear astern* becomes *overlapped* within two of her hull lengths to *leeward* of a boat on the same *tack*, then while they remain on the same *tack* and *overlapped* within that distance

(a) the *leeward* boat shall not sail above her *proper course* if doing so causes the *windward* boat to change course to *keep clear*, and

(b) the *leeward* boat shall gybe when her *proper course* is to gybe.

This rule does not apply if the *overlap* begins while the *windward* boat is required by rule 13 to *keep clear*.

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Reasons

1. Reasons for proposed rule 17(a): Current rule 17 can be broken by the leeward boat, either intentionally or accidentally, without affecting the windward boat. In such cases, the leeward boat may know she has broken a rule but with no protest decides not to comply with the Fundamental Principle of Sportsmanship; or the windward boat protests even though the breach clearly did not affect her and the leeward boat must take a penalty even though she never 'harmed' the windward boat. Neither situation is desirable.

The provision in the current rule, 'unless in doing so she promptly sails astern of the other boat', is an attempt to correct this problem in the case when the boat that is luffing above her proper course crosses astern of the other boat. But that provision does not solve the problem in all cases (see examples below). Additionally, the term 'sails astern of the other boat' is ambiguous – does it mean 'becomes clear astern', or does it mean 'crosses behind'?

Some examples of situations in which boats commonly break rule 17 without affecting the windward boat are shown below. In the first example (see Diagram 1) W and L are on a leg that is a broad reach. W is sailing in a non-spinnaker class and L is in a spinnaker class. The proper course for both boats is W's course, which is directly to the next mark. When L overtakes W, she opts to pass her to leeward, as a courtesy and to avoid a potential luff. She sails her proper course or below through position 3. At position 4, she reaches up to bring the apparent wind forward and to spend as little time as possible in W's wind shadow. This enables her to move ahead of W promptly and break the overlap, and both boats continue down the leg. At position 4, L is clearly sailing above her proper course and therefore breaks rule 17.

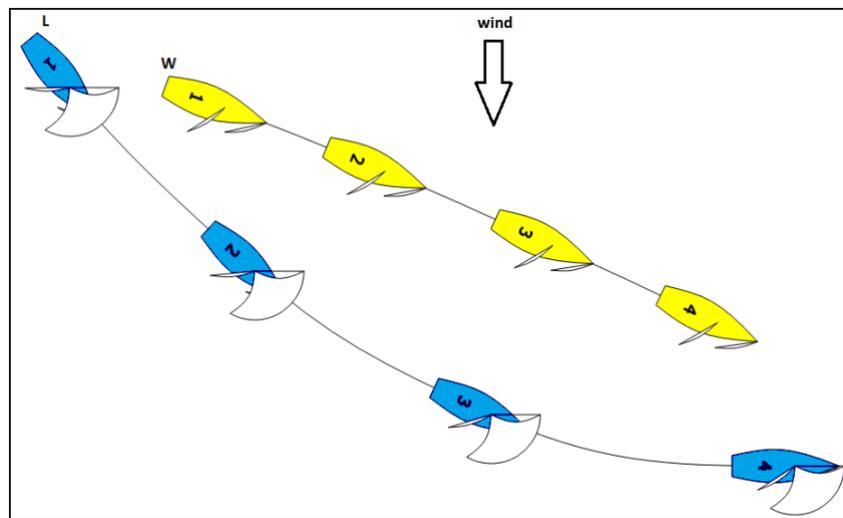


Diagram 1

A second example is shown in Diagram 2 below. PL and PW are sailing upwind on port tack. PL, sailing faster than PW, establishes an overlap 1.5 lengths to leeward of PW from clear astern. She decides to tack and pass astern of PW, hoping PW will continue toward the favoured right side. As PL is tacking, PW also decides to tack. While PL was luffing to tack, she was sailing above her proper course, and she could not immediately sail astern of PW, so PL breaks rule 17.

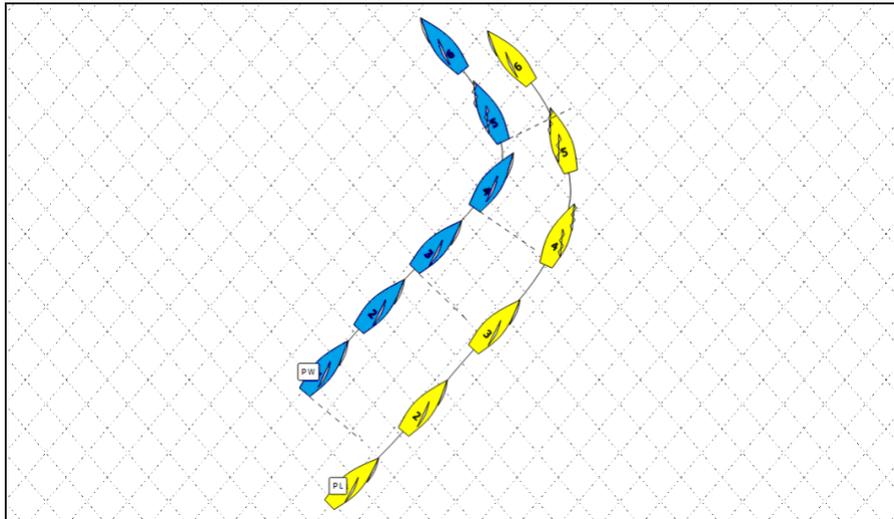


Diagram 2

In the common situation shown in Diagram 3 below, PL and PW are sailing upwind, with PL subject to rule 17. PL thinks she can tack and pass astern of PW, but after she luffs above her proper course she decides she cannot safely do so. PL bears away to her proper course without causing PW to change course to keep clear. PL breaks current rule 17.

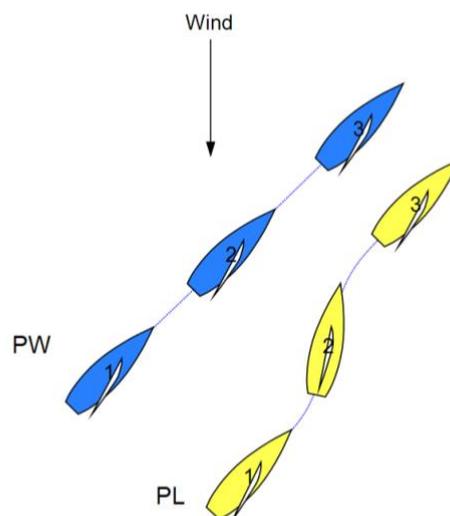


Diagram 3

2. Reasons for proposed rule 17(b): Rule 17 is frequently applied to the situation shown in Diagram 4 below. After position 2, rule 17 applies to SL. When SL reaches the point at which her proper course is to gybe, is she sailing above her proper course? In everyday nautical use, the phrase 'above her *proper course*' means 'closer to the wind than her *proper course*'. In this interpretation, SL is not sailing above her proper course – her proper course is actually slightly closer to the wind than her current course, but on the other tack. As a result, the wording of the current rule does not state clearly that SL must gybe when her proper course is to gybe. The use of proposed paragraph (b) solves this problem. With that wording rule 17

clearly requires SL to gybe when she reaches the point at which she would gybe in the absence of SW.

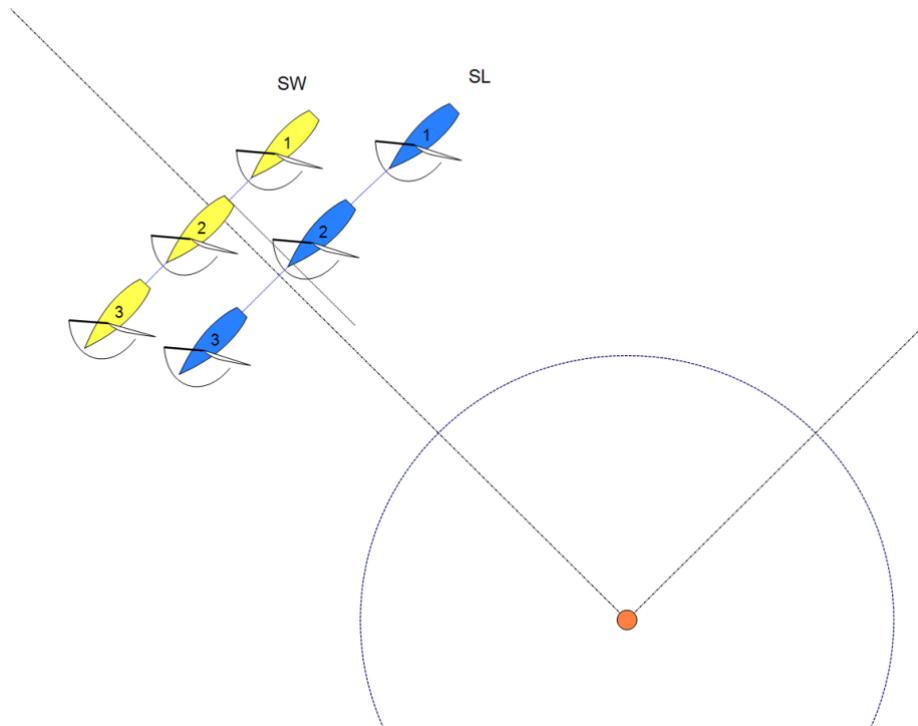


Diagram 4

*Note that this is one of two submissions from US Sailing, each of which proposes a change in rule 17. The proposals in these submissions are independent and we ask that they be voted on separately.*