

**Racing Rules Committee**

Rule 17

A submission from US Sailing

Purpose or Objective

Simplify rule 17 to make it clearer.

Proposal

Change rule 17 by deleting its last sentence:

**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*, she shall not sail above her *proper course* while they remain on the same *tack* and *overlapped* within that distance, 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.

Reasons

Removing the final sentence of rule 17 will make it easier for sailors to understand and comply with rule 17, and it will have little, if any, impact on fleet-race tactics.

1. This sentence was added largely for match racing to give the trailing boat more power in a 'slam dunk' situation, but now match racing has deleted rule 17 entirely. Because the 'slam dunk' very seldom occurs in fleet racing, the last sentence is not essential tactically and its deletion will therefore have minimal impact. By removing a potentially confusing and little-used sentence, rule 17 will be simpler and clearer.
  2. When the last sentence is deleted, a boat will be limited by rule 17 if she gets a leeward overlap after a tacking boat passes head to wind and the boats are then on the same tack. This change would protect the tacking boat slightly more because the leeward boat would be limited by rule 17 a little earlier. Removing the sentence will also reduce the risk of contact because the new leeward boat will no longer have the option of luffing up aggressively toward the tacking boat, which is a common tactic to defend against the 'slam dunk'.
  3. Two things about the last sentence of current rule 17 are difficult to judge:
    - (a) When is the tacking boat first on a close-hauled course?
    - and
    - (b) Is there an overlap at that moment?
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When a boat crosses ahead of another boat and then tacks, just after she passes head to wind, she is almost always clear ahead of the other boat and so it will be easy for both boats to know whether rule 17 applies later if the non-tacking boat gets a leeward overlap. Also, for many sailors it's easier to judge when a boat is head to wind than when she has reached a close-hauled course.

*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.*

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