

Racing Rules of Sailing

Definition - Finish

A submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee

Purpose or Objective

To correct several problems with the current definition *Finish*.

Proposal 1

Finish A boat *finishes*, **with all her crew in physical contact with the boat**, when any part of her hull, or crew or equipment in normal position, crosses the finishing line in the direction of the course from the last *mark*, either for the first time or after taking a penalty under rule 44.2 or, after correcting an error made at the finishing line, under rule 28.1.

Current Position

As above.

Reasons for Proposal 1

Proposal 1 is related to an issue raised in Q&A E4 (Q&A 2008-002). The addition of “with all her crew in physical contact with the boat” would imply that a boat’s crew must be in contact with the boat when she crosses the finishing line in order for that crossing of the line to “count” as her finish. Some race officials have interpreted the current definition to mean that if a capsized boat is blown across the finishing, or if current sweeps her across, she has finished even if some of her crew are some distance from the boat (see Q&A E4). Others find this to be an undesirable or unreasonable extension of the meaning of “in normal position.” If the added words are accepted, then a capsized boat will not finish unless all members of her crew are in contact with the boat when she crosses the line. This change promotes safety by making the recovery of a crew member who has become separated from the boat a requirement prior to finishing.

Proposal 2

Finish A boat *finishes* when any part of her hull, or crew or equipment in normal position, crosses the finishing line **from its course side** ~~in the direction of the course from the last *mark*~~, either for the first time or after taking a penalty under rule 44.2 or, after correcting an error made at the finishing line, under rule 28.1.

Current Position

As above.

Reasons for Proposal 2

The change from “in the direction of the course from the last *mark*” to “from the course side” is proposed because it often is unclear which mark should be considered “the last mark”. In some cases, “the last mark” could be either the last rounding mark or a government channel buoy that the sailing instructions required boats to pass on the channel side while sailing from the last rounding mark to the finishing line. An objective of the definition has always been that all boats finish in the same direction from the course side of the line, thereby avoiding the chaos that could occur if some boats finished by crossing the line in one direction at the same time that others were finishing by crossing it in the opposite direction. This objective is better achieved by the proposed use of “the course side”, a term that has been used, and well understood, elsewhere in the rulebook for many years (see rules 44.2, 29.1, 29.2 and 30.1).

Proposal 3

Finish A boat *finishes* when any part of her hull, or crew or equipment in normal position, crosses the finishing line in the direction of the course from the last *mark*. **However, she has not finished if after crossing the finishing line she**

(a) takes a penalty under rule 44.2, or

(b) corrects an error under rule 28.1 made at the line.

~~, either for the first time or after taking a penalty under rule 44.2 or, after correcting an error made at the finishing line, under rule 28.1.~~

Current Position

As above.

Reasons for Proposal 3

The current definition’s use of “either . . . or . . .” in one long sentence results in a definition that is ambiguous and that can be interpreted to mean something very different from its intended meaning. It is not at all clear that, after crossing the finishing line when a boat takes a penalty under rule 44.2 or corrects an error under rule 28.1 made at the line, her first crossing of the line does not “count” as her finish, and she has not finished until she crosses the line in the correct direction a second time after taking her penalty or correcting her error. The proposal makes it easy for the reader to see that, as intended, such a boat does not finish until she crosses the line a second time. Also, breaking the current definition’s one long sentence into two sentences makes the definition easier to read.

Proposal 4

Finish A boat *finishes* when any part of her hull, or crew or equipment in normal position, crosses the finishing line in the direction of the course from the last *mark*. **However, she has not finished if after crossing the finishing line she**

- (a) takes a penalty under rule 44.2, or**
- (b) corrects an error under rule 28.1 made at the line, or**
- (c) continues to sail the course.**

~~, either for the first time or after taking a penalty under rule 44.2 or, after correcting an error made at the finishing line, under rule 28.1.~~

Current Position

As above.

Reasons for Proposal 4

Proposal 4 builds on Proposal 3. Many race committees set a course that requires boats to sail two or more laps, with the added requirement that they cross the finishing line at the end of each lap. This course is frequently used for informal local races. Technically speaking, under the current definition, the boats “finish” at the end of the first lap, but obviously that is not what is intended when such a course is used. The same issue can arise when other types of courses are used. As Q&A E7 (Q&A 2009-026) shows, there are situations when a boat inadvertently crosses the finishing line in the direction of the course from the last mark well before she has finished sailing the course. The addition of “continues to sail the course” to the second sentence proposed in Proposal 3 makes it clear that, if such a boat continues to sail the course after crossing the line, she has not finished.

This submission was prepared by the Rule 28 Working Party.

Clean copy of the definition *Finish* if all these proposals are accepted:

Finish A boat *finishes* when, with all her crew in physical contact with the boat, any part of her hull, or crew or equipment in normal position, crosses the finishing line from its course side.

However, she has not *finished* if after crossing the finishing line she

- (a) takes a penalty under rule 44.2,
 - (b) corrects an error under rule 28.1 made at the line, or
 - (c) continues to sail the course.
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