



Understanding the Racing Rules of Sailing

When discussing the Racing Rules of Sailing, do you use terms such as:

“Tacking too close”

“Gybing too close”

“Overtaking boat”

“Zone around an obstruction”

“Mast-abeam”

If so, your rules knowledge is out-of-date. None of these terms appear in “The Racing Rules of Sailing for 2009-2012”. Every four years, the rules are revised in lockstep with the Olympics. A major overhaul was affected in the 1997-2000 rules, and more subtle changes have occurred since. The major change in the 2009-2012 rules was the complete re-writing of “Section C - At Marks and Obstructions”. While the intent of the most recent overhaul was to not substantially “change the game”, the language and rules which dictate allowed maneuvers have changed. And, situations which used to be described by terms such as “tacking too close” are still covered in the rules, but using different language and descriptions. This situation is now covered by Rule 13 “While Tacking”. If you think that a boat clear ahead cannot fall off to try to prevent you from establishing an inside overlap, you are thinking rule 17.2 – which no longer exists as of 2009.

It is essential that competitors understand the Racing Rules of Sailing. This is especially true when racing Harbor 20's. These boats are heavy and capable of doing severe damage in collisions. It is no fun being fouled, or worse, sustaining damage to your Harbor 20. When everyone understands and plays by the Racing Rules of Sailing, the competition is top notch, and collisions do not occur.

But, the Racing Rules of Sailing are not simple! While the rules which describe the allowed maneuvers on the water are contained in a six page section called “When Boats Meet”, entire books are written to provide explanation and interpretation. A certain amount of study is required to really understand the rules. Reading the rules is not sufficient to gain a thorough understanding. Reading the books on the subject is a good approach. Attending the “Understanding the Racing Rules of Sailing” seminar is a great way to get a running start. This seminar covers all of the rules and definitions which pertain to boats maneuvering while racing. Animated PowerPoint is used to visually depict how the rules work. The course materials have been carefully reviewed by Dave Perry.

By knowing the rules, you will not be intimidated by those who either do not know, or who knowingly abuse, the rules.

The “Understanding the Racing Rules of Sailing” seminar is being offered one month before the 2010 Championship in the hope that we all enjoy a “Safe and Sane” event.

If you have questions or suggestions regarding this seminar, please contact:

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We hope to see you there!