

World Sailing Racing Rules Question and Answer Service

Q&A 2023.004

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Shortening the course

Situation 1

A sailing instruction for a coastal race states that, when the course is shortened, boats will be notified before the first boat crosses a stated line of latitude.

The race committee decides to shorten the course and makes the notification.

There are no protests or requests for redress, the race is scored and prizes are given.

The race committee later learns that it had made the notification after one boat had already crossed the line of latitude.

The race committee takes no action.

Question 1

May the race committee take no action if it learns that it has made a mistake?

Answer 1

Yes.

The procedures available for the race committee when it makes a mistake, are:

(a) abandoning the race when there is a reason directly affecting the fairness of the competition, or

(b) requesting redress for a boat affected by an improper action or omission of the race committee.

See rules 32.1(d) and 60.2(b).

If the fairness of the competition is not affected or a boat's score has not been made significantly worse, though no fault of her own, by the error of the race committee, the race committee is not required to take any action.

Question 2

Would the answer be different if the race committee becomes aware of its error before the race is scored?

Answer 2

No.

See Answer 1.

Situation 2

A sailing instruction states: 'Courses will not be shortened. This changes rule 32'.

In a three-laps race, boats are required to cross the line at the end of each lap. The same line is identified as a finishing line. There is no time limit for the race.

The wind drops and the race committee displays flag S with two sounds before the boats crossed the line for the second time.

Boat A, aware of the sailing instruction, continues to sail the course and completes the third lap. All the other boats leave the racing area after sailing two laps.

Question 1

What boat(s) did sail the race complying with rule 28?

Answer 1

Only boat A complied with rule 28 by sailing the course designated in the sailing instructions.

Question 2

Was there an improper action or omission of the race committee to display flag S with two sounds?

Answer 2

Yes.

Rule 32 was changed by the sailing instructions in compliance with rules 85 and 86 therefore the procedures for shortening the course provided by rule 32 were not available.

Question 3

Would the answer to the previous question be different if there was a time limit and the race officer decided it was unlikely that any boat would finish within it, but boat A did complete three laps within the time limit?

Answer 3

No.

See answer 2.

Question 4

Will the answer to question 2 be different if the race officer had overlooked the sailing instruction?

Answer 4

No.

The race committee shall be governed by the rules in the conduct and judging of the event as required by rule 5.

Question 5

What procedures are available for the race committee if there was a time limit and the race officer decided it was unlikely that any boat would finish the three-laps within it?

Answer 5

When the option to shorten the course is not available to the race committee and it is unlikely that any boat will finish within the race time limit, the race committee may decrease the length of a leg by displaying of flag C with repetitive sounds and a '–' or abandon the race. See rules 32.1(b) and 33(b).