

Racing Rules of Sailing

Rule Appendix B17

A submission from the Royal Yachting Association

Purpose or Objective

To clarify the meaning of the rule

Proposal

Amend rule B17 as follows:

17 ON THE SAME TACK BEFORE A REACHING START

Rule 17 is changed to:

When, at the warning signal, the course to the first mark is approximately ninety degrees from the true wind, a board *overlapped* to *leeward* of another board on the same tack during the last 30 seconds before her starting signal shall not sail above **the her** shortest course **through the starting line** to the first *mark* while they remain overlapped if as a result the other board would need to take action to avoid contact, unless in doing so she promptly sails astern of the other board.

Current Position

See above.

Reason

1. The existing wording 'above the shortest course to the first mark' is ambiguous. Sailors, coaches and judges disagree about the correct interpretation, leading to confusion and inconsistent protest decisions.
2. The proposed wording makes the meaning of the rule clear and implements the intention of the rule.
3. In the diagram it is clear that in scenario A at the windward end of a reaching start line the leeward overlapped board breaks rule B17 when she luffs between positions 2 and 3. However, in scenario B at the leeward end of the starting line the rule becomes ambiguous. Some judges believe that the words 'the shortest course to the first mark' is the direct course from the leeward board's position to the first mark, which in scenario B passes to leeward of the pin end mark. If this is correct the leeward board breaks rule B17 if she luffs to pass through the starting line to start, this is not the intention of the rule. Other judges believe that the leeward board's 'shortest course to the first mark' is her course through the starting line and then to the first mark.

Submission 224-15 addressed scenario A which is considered to be a dangerous manoeuvre for boards approaching a reaching start at high speed. The submission introduced a 'proper course' for boards before the start and introduced rule 817 requiring boards not to sail above that 'proper course' in the last thirty seconds before the starting signal. These changes were introduced in the first published version of the RRS 2017-2020.

4. However, Correction #3 published in October 2016 deleted the changed definition of 'proper course' for boards and amended the wording of Appendix B17 to the current wording as shown above. The same ambiguity existed in both the original and the corrected wording in the 2017-2020 rules and was carried forward into the current rules.

