

Racing Rules of Sailing

Definition - Obstruction, New Definition – Continuing Obstruction Rule 19.2

A submission from the Chair of the Racing Rules Committee

Purpose or Objective

Improve the definition of obstruction, clarify what a continuing obstruction is, and write the rule so a sailor has an understanding of their obligations no matter what the obstruction is.

Proposal 1

(a) Change the Definition of obstruction (as agreed in 003-22) and replace it with:

~~**Obstruction** An object that a boat could not pass without changing course substantially, if she were sailing directly towards it and one of her hull lengths from it. The following are also obstructions: an object that is so designated in a rule, or that can be safely passed on only one side, and an object, area or line in a rule that boats are prohibited from entering or crossing. An obstruction becomes a continuing obstruction when a boat is passing it and will pass alongside it for at least three of her hull lengths. However,~~
~~(a) a boat racing is not an obstruction to other boats unless they are required to keep clear of her or, if rule 22 applies, avoid her; and~~
~~(b) the following are not a continuing obstruction: a vessel under way, a boat racing, and a race committee vessel that is also a mark.~~

Obstruction An obstruction is:

- a) **an object that a boat could not pass without changing course substantially, if she were sailing directly towards it and one of her hull lengths from it,**
- b) **an object that is so designated in a rule,**
- c) **an object that can be safely passed on only one side, or**
- d) **an area or line in a rule that boats are prohibited from entering or crossing.**

However, a boat racing is not an obstruction to other boats unless they are required to keep clear of her or, if rule 22 applies, avoid her.

(b) Add new definition:

Continuing Obstruction An obstruction where the smallest boat referred to in the rule would need a distance of three of her hull lengths to pass. However, the following are not a continuing obstruction: a vessel under way, a boat racing, and a race committee vessel that is also a mark.

Proposal 2

Change rule 19.2(a) to:

- (a) A right-of-way boat may choose to pass an *obstruction* on either her port or starboard side.
If a right of way boat changes course when choosing which side to pass the obstruction, it shall give the other boat room to keep clear.

Proposal 3

Change rule 19.2(c) to:

- (c) While **at an obstruction** ~~boats are passing a continuing obstruction~~, if a boat that was *clear astern* and required to *keep clear* becomes *overlapped* between the other boat and the *obstruction* and, at the moment the *overlap* begins, there is not *room* for her to pass between them,
- (1) she is not entitled to *room* under rule 19.2(b), and
 - (2) while the boats remain *overlapped*, she shall **give the other boat room to sail along or past the obstruction** ~~keep clear and rules 10 and 11 do not apply.~~

Current Position

See above

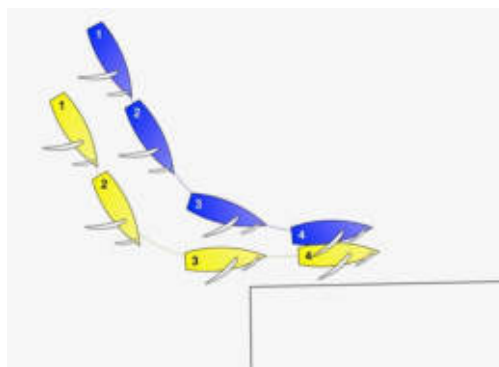
Reasons

1. Proposal 1 includes the concept of an obstruction becoming a continuing obstruction only after boats are passing it and then if they will continue to pass it for 3 hull lengths. This concept was not codified in the rules until 003/22 submission. Discussions with sailors if that they look at objects as they approach it (prior to being “at” the object) and then they determine what rules apply and what their rights and obligations are.

The split of definitions makes it easier to find the definition and simplifies what an obstruction is.

2. Proposal 2 codifies how rule 19 has been interpreted (for example, see Match Racing Call B15, question 2). If a right of way boat can choose what side to pass an obstruction, and when it does this it is therefore taking the room it is entitled to, it gets exonerated under rule 43.1(b). In a case of a late and fast change of course to pass an obstruction, the outside boat may also be exonerated as it was entitled to room to keep clear and it was not given that room. The rule may allow for both boats in an incident being exonerated!

This change makes it clear that while the right of way boat may choose what side to pass an obstruction, it should make the decision and the change of course in such a way that the outside, keep clear boat has room to keep clear. Below is a diagram showing an example incident regarding this rule:



3. Proposal 3 modifies rule 19 both (b) and (c) of rule 19 rules apply to all types of obstructions. This removes the need to identify what is an obstruction or a continuing obstruction as the same rules apply to both.

The only requirement for a need to define what is a continuing obstruction will be to determine what rule applies to a large object that is also a mark. This will simplify the application of rules where islands are used as marks.

Rule 19.2(c) currently has a scenario where rules 10 or 11 do not apply. All other rules in the RRS are written where boats entitled to room are exonerated for a breach. This change brings rule 19.2(c) into line with the rest of the RRS.
