

## Racing Rules of Sailing

### New Case

A submission from the Chair of the Racing Rules Committee

#### Purpose or Objective

To have a case that addresses, in a constructive and helpful way, a question that has been around for many years.

#### Proposal

Add a new Case

### CASE XXX

**Definitions, Mark-Room**

**Definitions, Room**

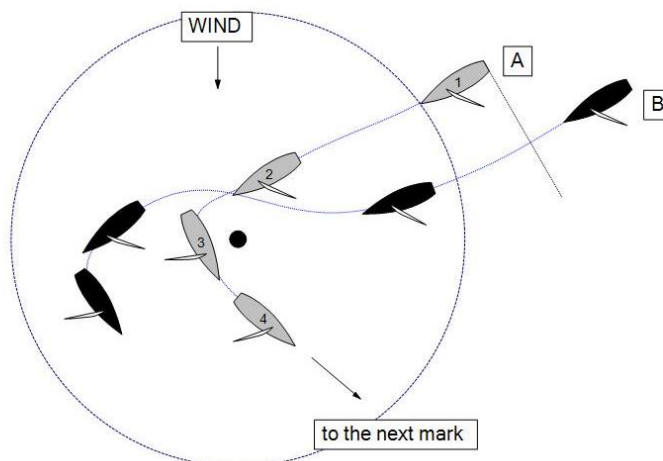
**Rule 10, On Opposite Tacks**

**Rule 18.2(a)(2), Giving Mark-Room**

**Rule 43.1, Exoneration**

*Mark-Room is the space a boat needs to round or pass a mark in a seamanlike way. It does not include additional space a boat may prefer to take in order to gain some tactical advantage in the race.*

#### **Facts for Question 1**



A and B were approaching a mark to be left to port on starboard tack. The boats needed to gybe around the mark to sail on a reach on port tack to the next mark. A reached the zone clear ahead of B, sailed to the mark and gybed onto port tack. After her gybe, B, on starboard tack, had to change course to avoid A and hailed 'Protest!'

**Question 1**

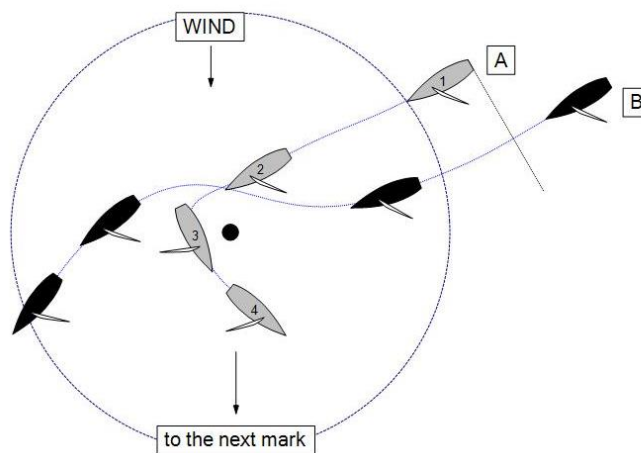
At position 3, was A sailing within the mark-room to which she was entitled?

**Answer 1**

Yes. A reached the zone clear ahead of B, and was therefore entitled to mark-room under rule 18.2(a)(2). From position 1, A's proper course was to sail close to the mark; therefore she was entitled to room to sail to the mark, room to round the mark leaving it to port, and room to leave it astern.

'Room,' as defined by the definition Room, is 'the space a boat needs...while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanlike way,' which includes space to avoid touching the mark and to comply with her obligations under the rules of Part 2 with respect to the boat required to give her mark-room as well as any other nearby boats (see Cases 21 and 118).

Because the boats needed to sail on port tack to sail directly to the next mark, mark-room included room for A to gybe and sail on port tack during her rounding manoeuvre. As A failed to keep clear of B at position 3, she broke rule 10; however, because she was sailing within the mark-room to which she was entitled, she is exonerated by rule 43.1(b). B complied with her obligation to give A mark-room under rule 18.2(a)(2).

**Facts for Question 2**

The facts are the same as in Question 1, except that the next leg was a downwind leg on which the boats would need to sail on both tacks to reach the next mark.

**Question 2**

At position 3, was A sailing within the mark-room to which she was entitled?

**Answer 2**

No. A reached the zone clear ahead of B, and was therefore entitled to mark-room under rule 18.2(a)(2). As stated in Answer 1, 'room' is the space a boat needs to round the mark in a seamanlike way. It does not include additional space a boat may prefer to take in order to gain some tactical advantage in the race.

At position 2, B was giving A the space she needed to round the mark on the required side and leave the mark astern in a seamanlike way. Because A did not need to gybe to round the mark to begin sailing the next leg, at position 3 she was not sailing within the mark-room to which she was entitled. Therefore she is not exonerated by rule 43.1(b) for her breach of rule 10.

### **Reason**

A commonly debated rules issue is whether a boat entitled to mark-room is entitled to exoneration when she gybes to sail her proper course when rounding a windward or offset mark onto a run.

The definition Mark-Room has been changed for the 2025-2028 RRS. The phrase “as necessary to sail the course” has been removed from the new definition Mark-Room. Often when there is a change, there is uncertainty as to the meaning of the new rule. A Case can be very useful to the sailing community by providing the correct interpretation and application of the new rule.

Under the new rules, the qualifier for how much room a boat is entitled to is found in the definition Room, which says, in essence, mark-room is the space a boat “needs” to round or pass the mark in a seamanlike way. If a boat does not need to gybe to begin sailing the next leg, then mark-room does not include room to gybe.

The Case makes this point by first illustrating the rules application at a traditional “gybe mark” where all the boats need to gybe to begin sailing the next leg. Then shows the same situation but the next leg is a run where the boats will sail on boat tacks to get to the next mark; i.e., they do not need to gybe to begin sailing the leg.

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