

## Racing Rules of Sailing 2021 – 2024

**A question-and-answer session with Chris Watts, a vastly experienced International Judge and our racing rules guru. Chris Rust posed the questions.**

*Once again we enter another four year cycle, which this time does not match the Olympic cycle and they have changed the rules yet again. So, is it a device to get us to buy new books or programs for our smart phones or is there a greater purpose to it?*

**Chris:** Well simply put this time there are no rule changes that will affect tactics whilst we are sailing.

*So, what have they done?*

**Chris:** The racing rules have to be translated into over 50 different languages. The English text is sometimes difficult to translate accurately so a lot of the changes are cosmetic to make this easier.

Some are to make things more precise. Some to make rules out of some of the bits we keep adding to sailing instructions, hence we can reduce the amount of pre-race reading. Appendix J guides event Organising Authorities through this.

When looking at the rule book, anything in the rules sections that has been changed has a side bar on the right-hand side of the page, but for some reason not where the Appendices have been changed.

*How have the changes affected us sailing our Squibs?*

**Chris:** A few things have been added to and within the Definitions.

The hull of our Squib is now the key issue when starting and finishing and no longer any attachment to the boat which does include the crew. An interesting thing is that when finishing, the boat may finish the race with you swimming after it, as rule 42.2 only requires the crew to be in contact with the boat when sailing to the next mark! However, for establishing or breaking overlaps there is no change and it includes the attachments in their normal positions.

A new definition is *Sail the Course* which includes the string bit that used to be in rule 28, but we do need to look a bit further at Appendix A (Scoring) A10, where we can find a new score, NSC, not sailing the course. Further to that if we look at A5.1, we can see that if the race committee observes a boat not sailing the course they can disqualify the boat without a hearing. Of course, if you disagree with the race committee you can fill in a scoring enquiry and if you do not like the answer you get then you can seek redress from the protest committee/jury.

Anything attached to a mark **deliberately** is part of the mark, so I hope it is not an aircraft carrier and maybe only a Portsmouth or Plymouth problem! An obstruction can be defined as a line between two or more points in the Sailing Instructions and you must not cross that line. A 'proper course' is now '**the one you would choose** in order *sail the course* and finish as soon as possible in the absence of other boats'.

*How about Part A of the rules?*

**Chris:** Again, mostly cosmetic with the a few words changed to give greater clarity:

Rules 14 (Avoiding Contact, when a right of way boat needs to act to avoid a collision); 16.2 (Changing Course, now on a beat to windward); 18.1 (now defines when giving room no longer applies) are changes to make things clearer.

20.4 Requirement for Hails, is about the use of other signals when conditions may prevent a verbal hail being made. Interestingly in the second part of the rule it allows the NoR to allow alternative communication in making the hail, including in a different language when the majority of the competitors will understand.

The two rules on Exoneration have been made simpler and are now combined as rule 43. It is important to remember that if you are forced to break a rule by another boat you can only be automatically exonerated if the other boat takes a penalty for that incident.

Lastly, on those evenings where you are still racing when the wind drops and the sun goes down, the rules said you had to turn on your navigation lights or retire. Well now rule 56 allows you to continue racing in the darkness as your Squib was never fitted with them. It also covers not having to make fog signals! So happy racing in the dark!

*We'll all look forward to that!*

**Chris:** So hopefully the new version of the rules is a little bit smarter.

C J W January 2021