



RYA / RORC GUIDANCE

RACING UNDER THE IRPCAS

ADVICE FOR COMPETITORS

Sailing instructions frequently replace the RRS Part 2 rules with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (IRPCAS).

In this situation the whole of RRS Part 2 (the rules that apply when boats meet) is replaced by all of the right-of-way rules in Part B of IRPCAS (the Steering and Sailing Rules). However, Part B must be read in conjunction with the rest of the IRPCAS because, for example, it uses terms defined elsewhere in the document (see ISAF case 109 for details).

In addition, when a boat racing under the RRS meets a boat that is not racing, the preamble to RRS Part 2 makes the whole of the IRPCAS applicable between them, and enforceable by protest.

RRS 48 makes the IRPCAS fog signals and lights requirements applicable and enforceable, regardless of whether boats are racing under the RRS or the IRPCAS.

How does this affect a boat that is racing?

The IRPCAS rules are designed to prevent collisions by ensuring that vessels maintain a safe course and distance in relation to each other. Compared with the RRS they can create different rights and obligations when you meet another boat racing. They will also change the tactical options available to you in many circumstances. You must treat a boat racing exactly as you would treat a sailing boat that is not racing.

A boat racing under the IRPCAS that breaches a rule of IRPCAS Part B may be protested.

Important differences between the IRPCAS and the RRS

The notes and example below point out some important differences between the IRPCAS and the RRS but there are many others. It is vital that you read and understand the full IRPCAS rules. See RYA-G2 International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.

Under the IRPCAS, when sailing boats meet:

- There are “opposite tack” and “windward/leeward” rules that are similar to the equivalent rules in the RRS.
- There is an “overtaking” rule that states that an overtaking boat must keep out of the way of the boat it is overtaking. This applies regardless of their tacks or which is the windward boat. In particular, this may change the game when an overlap is established from astern.
- There is no right-of-way boat; instead there is a “give-way” boat and a “stand-on” boat. Each has specific obligations towards the other. In broad terms, the give-way boat must “keep out of the way of” the other and the stand-on boat must “maintain her course and speed”.

- The obligation of the stand-on boat to maintain her course and speed is the main difference between the IRCAS and the RRS. Under the RRS a right-of-way boat is given some scope to manoeuvre against a keep-clear boat. No such freedom exists under the IRCAS.
- Similarly to the RRS, the IRCAS require a stand-on boat to take avoiding action when it becomes clear that a give-way boat is not keeping clear. However, all changes of course required by the IRCAS must be substantial and made in good time, so that the intentions of the boat changing course are clear to the other. This may require an earlier and larger change of course than that needed under the RRS.
- There is an IRCAS rule that imposes special requirements in poor visibility. There is no "stand on" boat in fog!
- There are no special rules for rounding or passing marks or obstructions.

Example

IRCAS Rule 13 (overtaking) says that a vessel is overtaking when she is "coming up ... in such a position...that she would be able to see only the sternlight of that vessel but neither of her sidelights" and also says that "any vessel overtaking another shall keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken". Rule 13(d) goes on to say a boat that has come up from astern remains an overtaking boat and required to keep out of the way until she "is finally past and clear."

IRCAS Rule 17 (action by stand on vessel) says "When one of two vessels is to keep out of the way the other shall keep her course and speed".

The combination of these rules creates an important difference in the rights and obligations of boats rounding a mark.

If two or more boats are approaching a rounding mark, an overtaking boat (IRCAS 13) must keep out of the way of any boat she is overtaking. However, a boat being overtaken must maintain her course and speed (IRCAS 17), and must not alter course to round the mark unless she can *definitely* do so without causing a give-way boat that is keeping out of the way to alter course.

Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS)

Neither the replacement of the RRS by the IRCAS as between boats that are racing, nor the provisions of the preamble to Part 2 of the RRS between a boat racing and one that is not, make all of the IRCAS enforceable by an event's protest committee. In particular, boats that break IRCAS rule 10, Traffic Separation Schemes, can only be protested under limited circumstances.

The rules relating to Traffic Separation Schemes are enforceable in the courts for all vessels, including boats racing, and heavy fines can be, and frequently are, imposed for non-compliance. Also, when a TSS is encountered during racing, it is often possible for a boat that fails to comply with IRCAS 10 to gain a significant advantage over a boat that does comply.

If Traffic Separation Schemes are likely to be significant for an event (regardless of whether boats are racing under the RRS or the IRCAS), protests for a breach of IRCAS rule 10 may be enabled by the use of a sailing instruction to the effect that IRCAS Rule 10 will apply.

Further, when it is possible that crossing a TSS will be incompatible with normal racing, sailing instructions may give limited permission for the use of the engine for propulsion (see RRS 42.3(h)), or make all of a TSS a prohibited zone.

Other restrictions

Harbour byelaws often include requirements that are additional to the IRCAS. The 'moving obstruction' regulation in Southampton Water is a well-known example. Elsewhere, there may be other authority byelaws and regulations. A boat that breaks such rules will be answerable to the body making such rules and, in addition, may be protested and penalized under the RRS provided such rules are listed as governing the event.

SAMPLE SAILING INSTRUCTIONS

Competitors must be aware that sailing instructions may contain one or more of the following:

To adopt the IRCAS for part of an event

[Between timeA and timeB] [and] [at all times] [between position1 and position2] Part 2 of the Racing Rules of Sailing are replaced [by the right-of-way rules of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (the IRCAS)] [and] [or] [by the applicable Government right of way rules].

To apply rule 10 of the IRCAS (Traffic Separation Schemes)

Rule 10 of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (the IRCAS), Traffic Separation Schemes, shall apply.

To make one or more traffic separation schemes a prohibited zone

Boats shall not enter the areas bounded by [list of coordinates 1] [list of coordinates 2]
[list of coordinates n].