

Racing Rules of Sailing

Definition Proper Course

A submission from the Malaysian Yachting Association

Purpose or Objective

To amend the Definition of “*Proper Course*”

Proposal

Proper Course A course a boat’s **skipper reasonably believes** would sail to *finish* as soon as possible in the absence of the other boats referred to in the rule using the term. A boat has no *proper course* before her starting signal.

Current Position

As above. Currently, a claim that a boat was not sailing her proper course would have to be upheld by the Protest Committee when it is satisfied that the course sailed was not in fact the fastest course even though it was the reasonable belief of the skipper at the time.

Reasons

The wording of the current definition does not reflect the way we are interpreting the requirement which is simply the reasonable belief that the course is the fastest way to finish.

Examples

1. Sailing on a broad reach against the stream on a river, boat L gets an overlap to leeward of boat W. They come to a bend and L thinks the best course is to luff slowly to cross the river to get to the inside of the bend. W disagrees, protests, but nevertheless keeps clear. Other boats kept to the outside of the bend out of the stream and gained considerable over L and W, proving that L’s course did not meet the definition. Under the current rules the PC would have no alternative but to find L broke 17.
 2. Many sailors believe the best course is to approach a leeward mark wide and come closest to the mark when on a close-hauled course, and indeed this might be the best tactical course considering the presence of the other boat. But remove the other boat and it is not in fact the most efficient course (which is to be closest to the mark when on the extension of an imaginary line from the windward mark through the leeward mark).
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