

Racing Rules of Sailing

By Rick West

Whether you are on a Sunday day cruise in San Francisco Bay, a J 24 regatta on the John's River in Jacksonville or rounding the windward mark at the pond in the James Island County Park at Charleston controlling an EC12, the rules of sailing apply. It is part of sailing and part of our recreation. It is *not* a matter of choice. When you take the helm of a sail boat, not knowing even the basic rules of sailing places you, those you are responsible for and your property in harm's way.

Rounding marks, providing room and receiving Exoneration

Recommended addition to regatta Sailing Instructions

The following matter was discussed at length in June by Tom Germer, a knowledgeable rules teacher; Ken Morrison, a certified US Sailing Senior Judge and myself. Here is the issue and our recommendations. **Read More...**

The issue of a right away boat (ROW) being forced to break a rule because she was not given room at a mark rounding has been brought up and properly discussed. The RRS provides for the matter but does not clearly identify a means by which a ROW boat can appeal for exoneration on the water in RC sailing. Just saying, "I was forced into the mark," does not get it done.

Competitors in the EC12 Class have historically passed on the foul till it landed upon a boat at the root of the issue. This has addressed the issue on the water and supported the spirit of the rules. It is a practice not known to all but it is not a process. If there is someone party to the incident that feels they are not included the fault of the foul(s), then a protest process needs to be followed.

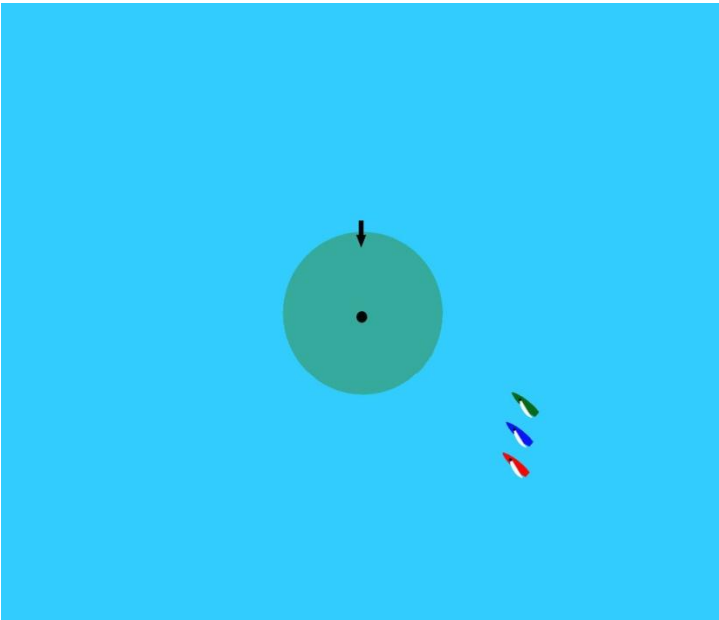
The only avenue for exoneration seen is to seek relief in a rules committee hearing following the race or heat. In such cases it is often seen wise to compete penalty turns in case things do not go well in committee resulting in a disqualification. This process and the scoring of a race or heat are considered too late.

Top sailors will complete a turn in such circumstances and forget the rest, it being pointless. This is seen as not being fair or in the spirit of sportsmanship.

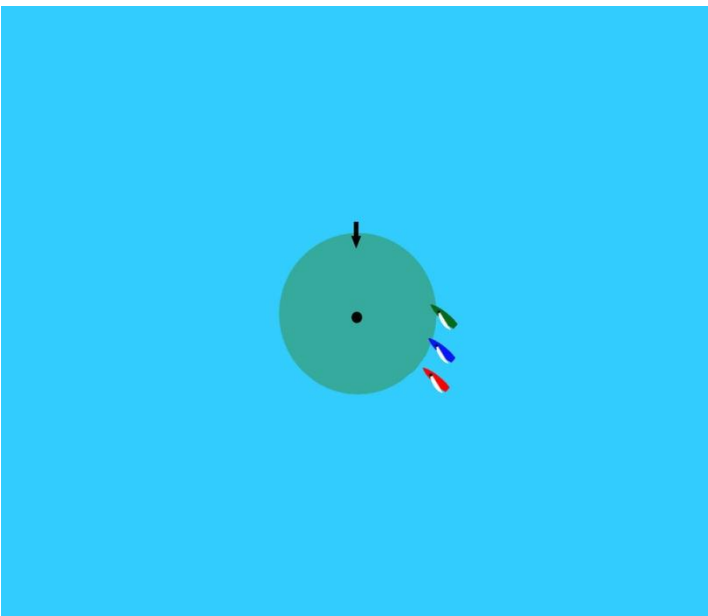
Here is the overview of the issue:

- The Rules:
 - 31, touch a mark.
 - 18.2, giving mark room.
 - 14, making contact with another boat.
 - 64.1(c), exoneration by the protest committee.
- An inside overlapped ROW boat hails for room to pass a turning mark. (Windward port rounding illustrated)
- The outside boat required to provide room does not for various reasons. This violates Rule 18.2 and, if contact is made Rule 14.
- The ROW boat is forced into the mark to avoid the overlapped boat or in doing so makes contact with the overlapped boat and the mark. This violates Rules 31 and 14.
- If exoneration is permitted by the Race Committee or by informal agreement between the two captains involved, and without a protest committee hearing, this violates Rule 64.1

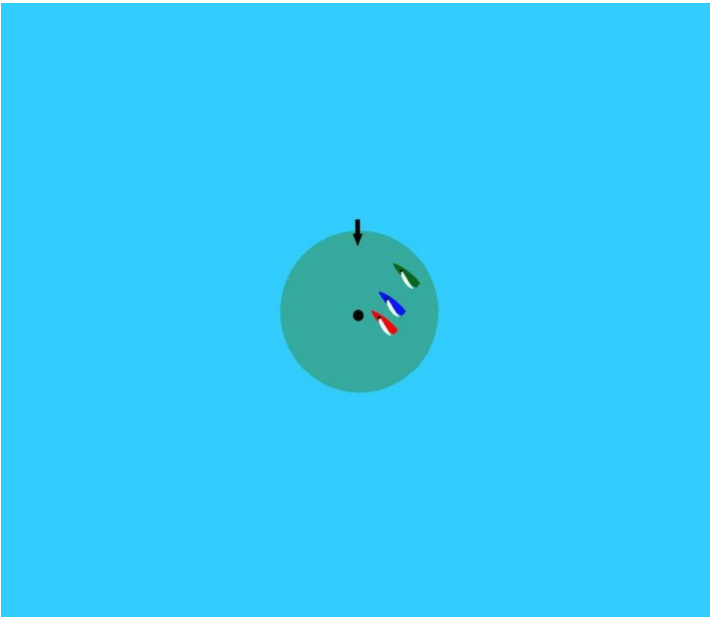
Here is the picture approaching the windward mark. This is a textbook illustration and could be presented with many boats being overlapped, clear ahead and clear astern. The first basic thought anytime boats are close to each other is to keep clear of all boats. Sailing rights are determined in many ways but stay clear.



Three boats are approaching a windward mark. Red is controlling and all are in a windward/leeward position.

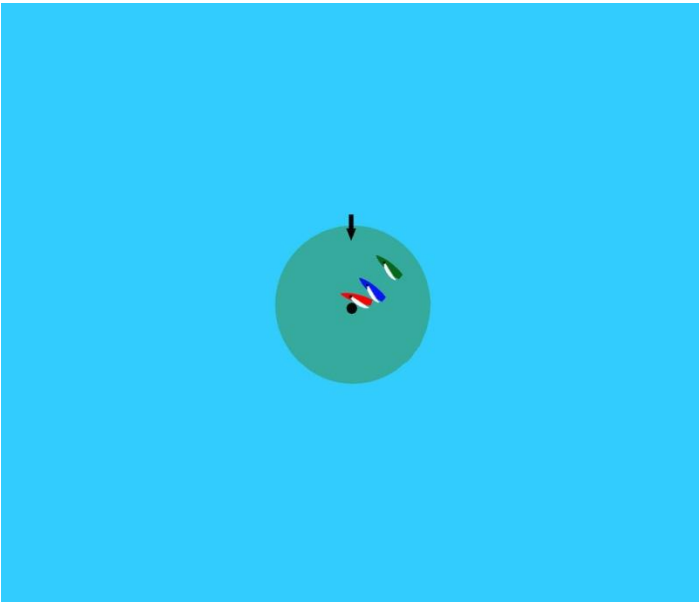


Before reaching the four boat circle all should be communicating to insure that proper room will be given my Blue and Green and Red can concentrate on the rounding to the benefit of all.



Red becomes uncomfortable of Blue's position and hails for mark room. It should be remembered here that *room* is different from keeping *clear* at a mark rounding because a boat turns by swinging its stern, in this case toward Blue.

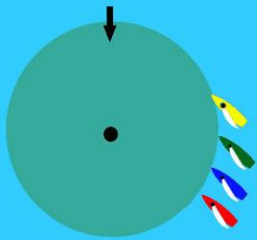
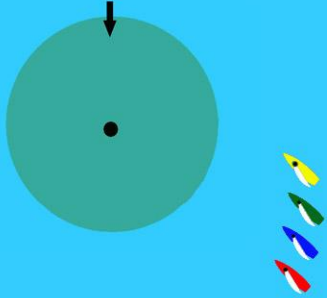
Green has moved away from Blue to properly make the rounding with good maneuvering and speed.

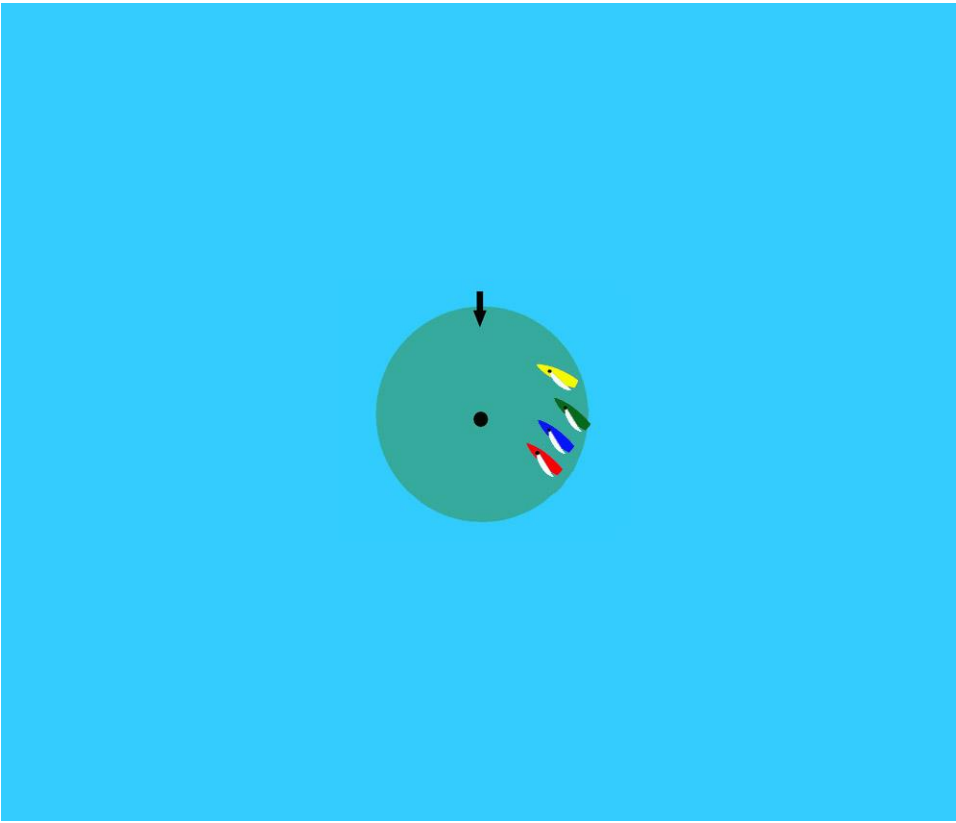


Red, mindful that Blue is restricting her maneuvering, pinches the mark and hits the mark to keep clear. It is likely also, that Red will make contact with Blue by her stern and then lose maneuvering and hit the mark and not be able to round the mark in a seamanship manner.

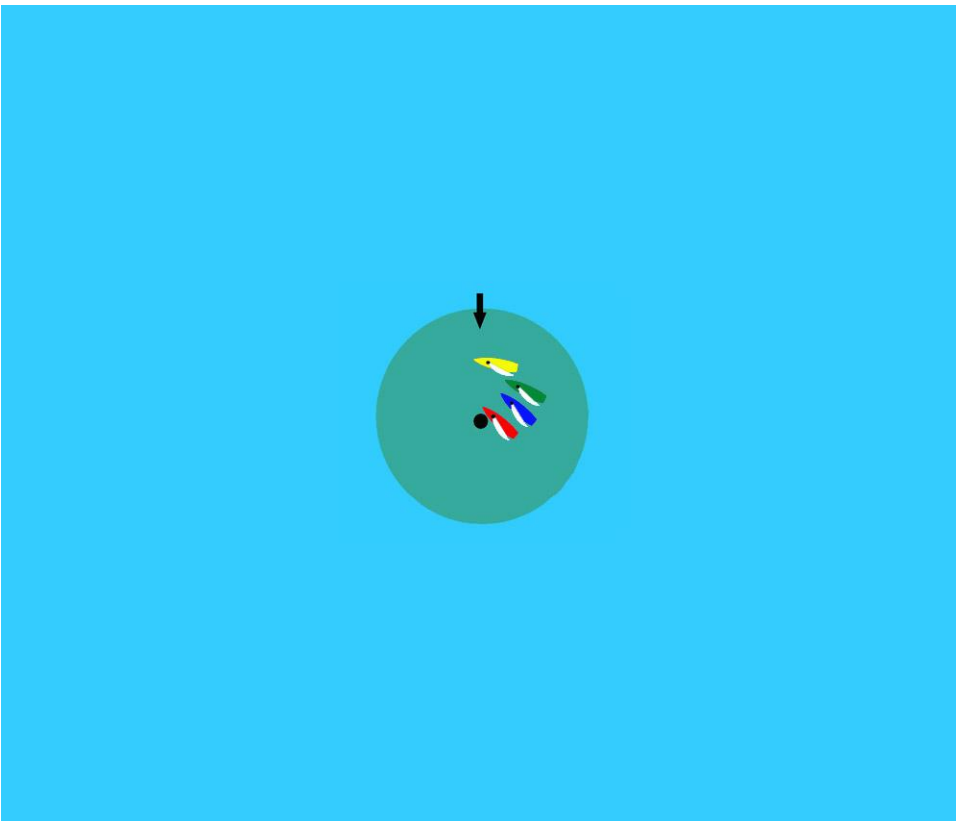
A race official calls Red for hitting of the mark and Red protests Blue for lack of room under Rule 18.2.

Let's show another graphic that we see often in our regattas before we cover the exoneration rules with our recommendations. Here we see the effect of one outside boat that may not have the full view of the situation and can cause a cascading collapse of a proper rounding.

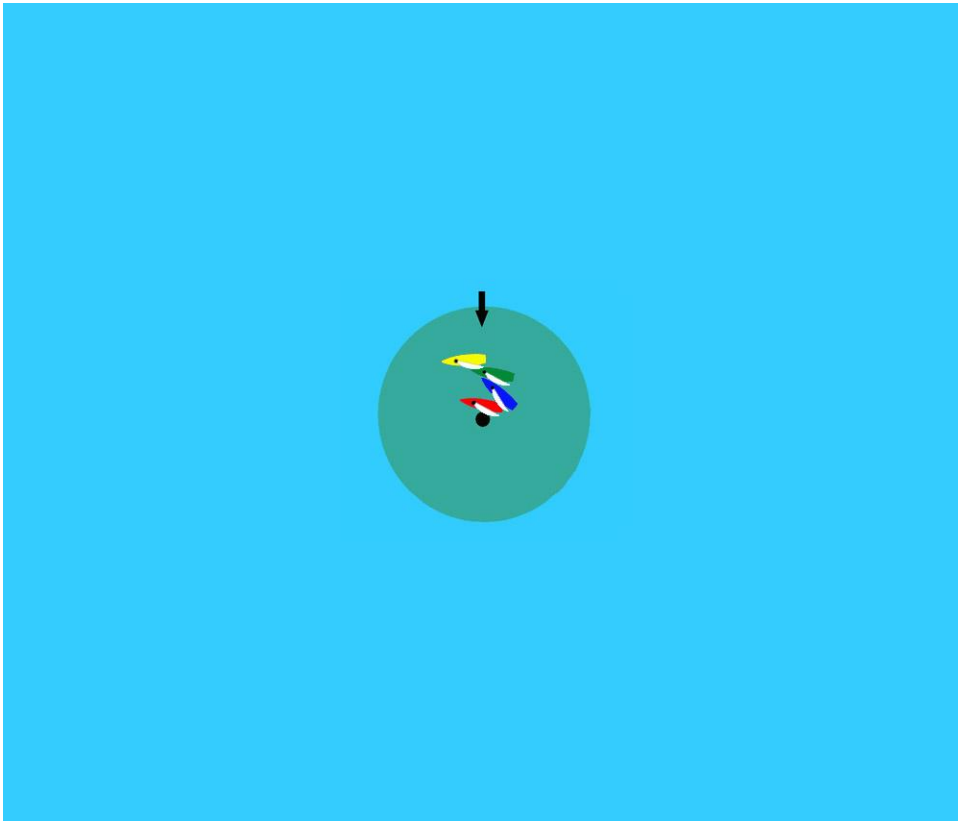




As Yellow intends to orbit the mark and inside boats, she is beginning to put pressure on Green. Green hails for room, being leeward and overlapped with Blue. She must stay clear of Blue.



The situation worsens, Green and Blue move to stay clear and Red is squeezed between the mark and Blue.



The event. Red hits the mark and makes contact with Blue. Blue makes contact with Green. Green makes contact with Yellow. Red is protested by the mark judge. Red protest Blue for lack of room and forced to hit the mark. Blue protests Green for lack of room and Green does the same to Yellow. Red, Blue and Green can, and may, hail protests for contacts as well.

In a protest hearing, it should be found that Yellow did not provide room to Green during the rounding. In attempting to keep clear Green and Blue forced Red into the mark and likely all making contact. Red, Blue and Green would be exonerated of all offended rules and Yellow will be held responsible. If she did complete a penalty, the meeting is over. If she did not, she is disqualified and the scorer notified. If there is damage to Red, Blue or Green, Yellow is to retire.

Conclusions:

If exoneration can be properly awarded by a protest committee, it would follow that it can be awarded by the race committee on the water by modifying the RRS in the regatta sailing instructions. This is permitted.

Rule 18.5 Exoneration, does not treat with the issues here or illuminate by reference the matters of Rules 14, 31 and 64.1.

It is considered that a ROW boat has not broken Rule 14 (contact) but the other boat by breaking Rule 18.2 (not giving room).

There is no solution for a ROW boat in this instance on the water. Whereas in RC sailing, there are multiple races in day(s) for the regatta, we recommend the following addition to sailing instructions to provide the opportunity for a on the water decision by the race committee:

“When a boat is wrongfully compelled by another boat to break rule 31, she shall be exonerated if the other boat acknowledges breaking a rule of part 2 by taking a penalty or retiring immediately. This modifies rules 31 and 64.1.”

What about the matters that multiple rules were broken in this cascading mess. US Sailing Appeal 65 found that multiple fouls that pertain to the *same incident* are treated as one. Therefore, if it is found that your boat is at fault, or you accept

fault in a on the water protest, you will complete one penalty. If you are found not to be at fault and are exonerated, you are exonerated for all.

Here is what they have said:

"The test of whether two occurrences were one or two incidents is whether the second occurrence was the inevitable result of the first. Times, distances, the actions of each boat and the prevailing conditions are all relevant to this test; the number of rules that may have been broken is not."

"Passing it on." Red acknowledges a mark judges call that she hit the mark. Red protests Blue for not giving room that caused her to hit the mark. Blue acknowledges and protests Green for not giving room and caused her to force Red into the mark. Green acknowledges and protests Yellow for not giving room. Yellow acknowledges and completes the penalty as soon as she is clear of all boats. The RC then can exonerate Red, Blue and Green and they sail on.