

PREAMBLE TO SECTION C

Section C rules do not apply at a starting *mark* surrounded by navigable water or at its anchor line from the time boats are approaching them to *start* until they have passed them.

The preamble makes it clear that none of the rules in Section C (18, 19 and 20) apply when boats are approaching a starting *mark* that is surrounded by navi-gable water or its anchor line to *start* until they have passed them.



“So does this having something to do with barging?”

Yes. I will explain what “barging” is. The preamble to Section C “shuts off” the “mark-room” rules at the starting *marks*. The reason is that it would lead to chaotic starts if *windward*/inside boats were entitled to *room* to pass between the committee boat and *leeward*/outside boats at the start (it’s often chaotic enough without them having that right!). When two boats are about to *start* and a *windward* boat tries to sail in between a *leeward* boat and a starting *mark* (often a race committee boat), and hits the *leeward* boat or causes her to bear away to avoid being hit, we say the *windward* boat is “Barging.” In fact, she is breaking rule 11 (On the Same Tack, Overlapped). (For more discussion on “barging” see the discussion in Chapter 7 entitled “Section A and B Rules in Action.”)

To accurately apply this rule, be sure you understand that an object large enough to satisfy the definition *Obstruction* is **always** an *obstruction*, even when it is used as a *mark*; i.e., it does not cease being one when it becomes the other. Therefore a race committee boat used as one end of the starting line is **both** a starting *mark* and an *obstruction* at the same time.

Now, having said that the preamble “shuts off” rule 18 (Mark-Room) and rule 19 (Room to Pass an Obstruction), there are in fact two narrow situations when, for reasons of safety, the rules do entitle a windward/inside boat to room at a starting mark from a leeward/outside boat.

Let’s look at those first.

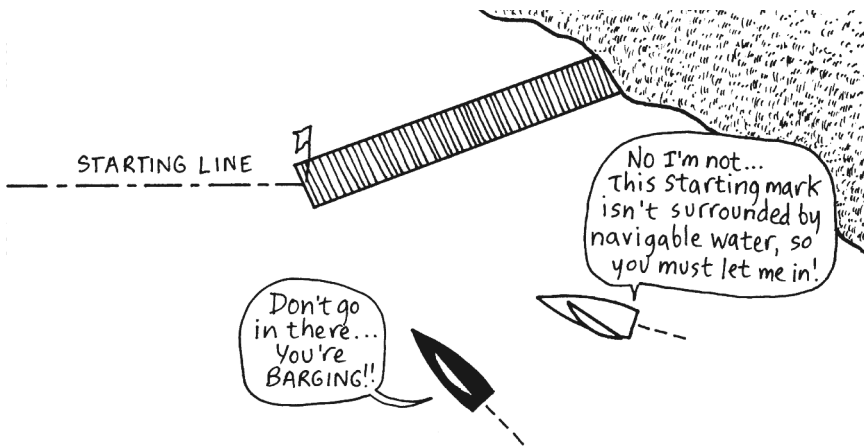
1) **At a starting *mark* not surrounded by navigable water:**

Though this situation is not common, it will arise when one end of the starting line is the end of a long dock or breakwater, or is a bell buoy that marks some shallow rocks or sandbars. “Not surrounded by navigable water” means there isn’t enough water for the inside boat to sail around the *mark* without running aground or hitting a dock or other object. At such a *mark*, an inside *overlapped* boat is entitled to *mark-room* under rule 18.2 (Giving Mark-Room) from an outside boat. And if the starting *mark* is a “continuing” *obstruction* (such as the end of a long dock), then the inside boat is entitled to *room* under rule 19.2(b) if there was space to pass between the outside boat and the *obstruction* in safety at the moment the *overlap* began (see rules 18.1(d) and 19.2(c)).

2) **At a starting *mark* that is also an *obstruction* when the boats are not approaching it to *start*:**

Again, when the starting *mark* is large enough to be an *obstruction* (such as most committee boats), rule 19 (Room to Pass an Obstruction) applies **before** boats are “approaching it to *start*.” Therefore, an inside *overlapped* boat is entitled to *room* at such a *mark* under rule 19.2(b) (Giving Room at an Obstruction) from an outside boat, provided the outside boat has been able to give the *room* since the *overlap* began. If the starting *mark* is a “continuing” *obstruction*, then the inside boat is entitled to *room* if there was space to pass between the outside boat and the *obstruction* in safety at the moment the *overlap* began (rule 19.2(c)). This is for safety purposes while boats are sailing past the *marks* well before *starting*.

So, if say at three minutes before the starting signal you were sailing along to leeward of W and were about to sail to leeward of the race committee boat, and for whatever reason W wanted to pass to leeward of it also, you would have to give her *room* to do so under rule 19.2(b), unless you were unable to do so from the moment the *overlap* began. Now to play this out, because boats aren’t required to pass the starting *mark* on its “required” side yet (rule 28.1, Sailing the Race, and the definition *Sail the Course*), you can choose to pass it



on either side (see rule 19.2(a)). You, as the *leeward* boat, have the right to sail where you please provided you make no sudden, fast course changes (rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped and rule 16.1, Changing Course); therefore, you can choose to luff and pass to windward of the committee boat. If, however, you choose to pass to leeward of the committee boat and fail to provide enough *room* for W to do likewise if she wishes to, you have broken rule 19.2(b).

Note that when you break a *rule*, even before the starting signal, you must take your Two-Turns Penalty immediately; you do not have to wait until the starting signal to do so (rule 44, Penalties at the Time of an Incident). If W happens to hit the *mark* (i.e., break rule 31, Touching a Mark) because you didn't give her enough *room*, she is exonerated by rule 43.1(b) (Exoneration).

“When is a boat considered to be ‘approaching a starting mark to start’?”



Though this question has never been discussed in a case or appeal, I would develop my opinion as follows. What is the purpose of the rule? Clearly it is preventing the situation where *windward/inside* (WI) boats can reach in and demand *room* at starting *marks* from *leeward/outside* boats (LO) that are trying to *start* there. And “when approaching the starting *mark* to *start*” is establishing the period of time during which these *windward/inside* boats know that they are not entitled to any *room*. Before LO is “approaching the starting *mark* to *start*,” WI is entitled to *room* at the *mark* (provided it is also an *obstruction*); and the rules are consistently clear in providing predictable and specific times when a boat's rights change. To me, this is no exception. When LO is clearly on her final approach toward the line with the intention of *starting*,