

RRS 68

The Latest News from the Judges' Committee

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WELCOME TO THE JUDGES' NEWSLETTER 2025!

Sarah Ashton

This edition of RRS 68 is packed with invaluable information, including:

- A critical rule change directly affecting protest committees, and steps are being taken to correct the "error".
- A significant alteration to the renewal qualifications for some National Judges.
- The "how to" for a new Rulebook has been repeated, as I have noticed the last quad book is still in use.
- A new Hearing Decision form for 2025.
- Prescriptions at international events

Your feedback is valuable. If you have any suggestions for RRS 68, please share them with us. We're here to listen and improve. You can reach out to me at ashtonsh@bellsouth.net.



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Wayne Balsiger

Rule 60.4 Protest Validity Issue: There are still some unintended consequences with the 2025-2028 Rules. One issue is with Rule 60.4(a)(2), which applies to protests when you see an incident but are not involved in it. The current rule makes that protest invalid.

Currently, rule 60.4(a)(2) prohibits "third-party protests," which is contrary to what the rules have permitted for a long time, and contrary to the Basic Principle: Sportsmanship and the Rules, which tells competitors they are expected to enforce the rules.

The US Sailing Racing Rules Committee proposes a change that may take effect on January 1, 2026. However, you can use that language now in your Notice of Race or Sailing Instructions to restore sailors' ability to protest a "third party" issue.

60.4 Protest Validity in the 2025 Rules:

(a) A protest is invalid

(2) if it is from a boat that alleges a breach of a rule of Part 2 or rule 31, but she was not involved in it, or did not see the incident, or

The logic of 60.4(a) is complex and contains double negatives that are hard to interpret. A careful read of rule 60.4(a)(2) says that a protest is "invalid" if the boat "was not involved in it" OR "did not see the incident." So, if either one of those criteria is true, then the protest is invalid. This means that if a boat is not involved in an incident, her protest should be found invalid, whether or not she saw the incident. This is a significant and unintentional change in protest validity.

For example, Boat A touches a mark and does not take a penalty. There is no related Part 2 incident. A couple of boat lengths behind A, Boat B sees A hit the mark and files a protest. Even if boat B's protest complies with the requirements of 60.4(a)(1), the current wording of 60.4(a)(2) means that this protest should be found invalid because, even though B saw the incident, she was not involved in it. The problem is that many protests valid under the 2021-2024 Racing Rules will no longer be valid under the 2025-2028 Racing Rules.

We feel strongly that this is a MAJOR PROBLEM. We recommend implementing this change immediately. To remedy this, include the following in your Notice of Race or Sailing Instructions:

1.x - Rule 60.4(a)(2) is changed as follows: (2) if it alleges a breach of a rule of Part 2 or rule 31 and is from a boat that was not involved in, and did not see, the incident, or

As noted, this is the same language the US Sailing Rules Committee is submitting to World Sailing to fix in 2026. However, you are encouraged to use it in 2025.

By Wayne Balsiger, Chair, Judges' Committee; Dave Perry, Chair, Appeals Committee; Peter Wilson, Chair, Rules Committee; and Mark Townsend, Chair of the Judges Training and Testing Subcommittee



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER *continued*

The Judges' Committee changed the National Judge Recertification Requirements: After serving as a National Judge for three full four-year terms, the requirement to take a test is waived. All other renewal requirements, including the renewal application and approval by the Judges' Committee, are still in effect.

This also applies to NJs whose certification expired in 2024 and are in the grace period to meet renewal requirements.

The rules do change, and we still expect judges to know the rules and protest procedures as well as their many other activities. However, we recognize test anxiety and that many professions require continuing education units, but they do not require passing a periodic test.

Hearing Decision Forms for 2025: The Judges' Committee now handles the Hearing Decision Forms and has updated them. The new forms include options to easily add the US Sailing Preferred Standard Wording in procedure, conclusions, and decisions. The forms endeavor to cover all procedural items to ensure hearings are properly conducted by judges at all events.

First, read the instructions, then practice with the forms a bit so you can efficiently use them. There is also a training video, *Using the Hearing Decision Template*, available to watch, where the forms are explained (including how to insert the preferred wording easily), and some practice hearings were held by the Roundtable group.

The forms are available as Word templates, PDFs, and printable PDFs so you can choose your preferred software or scribe by hand.

These forms will be revised regularly, with version 2 coming in the next week or so. It will change from drop-down choices to checkmarks, and minor revisions will be made. In the instructions is a feedback form for any feedback on form improvements in future revisions. These are all located under **USEFUL PROTEST COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS** on the [Judges' webpage](#).

We thank John Porter, RAJ of Area K, for his many hours of work creating these new forms and creating the US Sailing Preferred Standard Wording.

Non-Contrasting Sail Numbers in Some Classes: Race committees have found it difficult to identify boats with minimally contrasting sail numbers.

You recently received an email from Judie McCann with Tom Duggan's request from Race Management to point out the Appendix G4 rule in your NoR and SIs and remind sailors of the rule and the potential of being protested. We do want to be customer-friendly, but in various lighting conditions, the RC can't see the sail numbers adequately to identify boats. As a reminder, G4 specifies that a warning may be given with time to correct the issue.

Wayne Balsiger, Chair
webalsiger@gmail.com



FROM THE RACE ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

1. Has Your SafeSport Training Expired?

Please CHECK the Main Menu of your SOARS account NOW to be aware when your next training is due or if it has already expired. If it is not due to expire, set a calendar reminder to yourself so you won't miss it.

All certified Race Officials are required to complete ONE SafeSport Training annually to keep your certification in compliance and active. If you are not in compliance, your certification will automatically be suspended. You must take the full "SafeSport Trained" course once every four years and one "Refresher" course in each of the intervening years. Once you complete the online course, your SafeSport Training will be logged on to your membership record in the US Sailing database overnight.

SafeSport training is a free online course that provides education on Sexual Misconduct Awareness, Emotional and Physical Misconduct, and Mandatory Reporting (Understanding Your Responsibilities).

By being better educated and more aware of the various types of misconduct and how to recognize them, each of us can make our sport safer and help end abuse in sport.

For more information on SafeSport Training, visit the Athlete Safety Page on the US Sailing website or contact Judie in the Race Administration office at US Sailing.

Link: <https://www.ussailing.org/athlete-safety/>

2. The Team Race Call Book for 2025-2028 is now available from World Sailing!

You can download the PDF directly:

<https://d7qh6ksdplczd.cloudfront.net/sailing/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/29121727/The-Call-Book-for-Team-Racing-2025-2028.pdf>

Or visit the racing rules page to see all the publications available from WS:

<https://www.sailing.org/inside-world-sailing/rules-regulations/racingrules/>

3. Get your hot rulebooks here!

Please follow these directions precisely:

Thank you for your patience as we have worked to prepare the US rulebook for production. World Sailing's late December release of the final rules set us back significantly.

As in the past, we will provide a printed rulebook at no cost to all certified race officials. You are welcome to choose either the paper or waterproof book. The rulebook app is also available to you free of charge in both Android and iOS versions.

To order a copy of the book, please:

- Use this link to go directly to the item in the store: <https://ussailing.store/products/the-racing-rules-of-sailing-for-2025-2028-preorder>
- Log in with the password you have created for the store (not your US Sailing login). If you don't yet have a store password or forgot yours, click "Forgot password" and enter the email address that you received this email on.
- Use discount code "RRSFREE" to order your book for \$0.
- This offer is good for **one copy** of either the paper or the waterproof book.

If you have any difficulty accessing the store or ordering your book, please email us at store@ussailing.org for help.

US SAILING PRESCRIPTIONS. FOR INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Sandy Grosvenor, Chair US Sailing Race Administration Committee

Running an international regatta in the US and pondering what to do with the US Sailing Prescriptions? You are not alone. Help is here.

US Sailing has several prescriptions scattered throughout the Racing Rules of Sailing. And they apply, by default, at all events in the US (see RRS Definition Rules). Since international sailors are often unaware of country-specific rules, organizers of international events prefer not to have the prescriptions apply. But an OA cannot just delete them all. RRS 88.2 allows a country to limit what prescriptions can be changed in their country. And US Sailing has specified the following in its prescription to 88.2:

US Sailing prescribes that the notice of race or sailing instructions may change or delete any prescriptions except: this prescription, Appendix R, the prescription to the preamble to Part 5, and the prescriptions to rules 65.1, 70.3(b), and 76.1.

Further RRS J1.2(7) states that the following must be in the Notice of Race:

(7) when entries from other countries are expected, any national prescriptions that may require advance preparation (see rule 88);

And RRS J2.2(1) states that the Sailing Instructions must contain (if not in the NoR):

(2) when appropriate, at an event where entries from other countries are expected, a copy in English of the national prescriptions that will apply;

So that means if your event is expecting entries from other countries, then some U S prescriptions must always apply, and you need to state the NoR and SI. Over the years, I've seen several different approaches to handling adapting US Sailing Prescriptions – some good, some not so good, some not legal. So this quad, US Sailing has put together a nice, convenient standard document that you can easily customize and add to your NoR and/or SI.

That document has been posted on the US Sailing website at <url>.

Or (since Murphy's Law applies to a fixed URL in an online article), look for it at one of:

- US Sailing Racing Rules page (<https://www.ussailing.org/competition/rules-officiating/racing-rules/>)
- US Sailing Judges page under "Guidelines and Documents" (<https://www.ussailing.org/competition/rules-officiating/judges/#guidelines>)

It is a Word document that contains the minimum necessary prescriptions and instructions for where and how to cite them in the NoR and SI.

Hope this helps make your NoR's and SI's better!



HAPPENINGS IN AREA K

John Porter

Summer is approaching fast in Area K. With many major events happening between May 15 and September 15, Judges in the Midwest are working hard to squeeze in events and help our sport. With technology by our side, many judges are working multiple events per weekend.

Some great people are working toward new or upgraded certifications by learning and doing great work on behalf of sailors. It's fantastic to see great sailors embrace judging and look for training and committee opportunities. Kudos to Mike Kaspar for creating opportunities for Judges and Judges in Training to get experience at major events. We've got some great judges in training who are energetic and learning fast. Some Club Judges are well on their way to Regional Judges, doing events around the region and nation, and contributing excellence to the sport.

Around the Midwest, we continue to be mentors when the chief judge at major events. With so many people learning, chiefs have taken on the role of trainer, leader, and organizer. It is rare for a chief to take a hearing at a major event. Instead, they facilitate great teams, work with the OA and Race Management teams, interact with competitors, and ensure fairness across events. Many hearings at major events are chaired by Judges in Training or Club Judges, while experienced National and International Judges are scribing and helping to build confidence in the team.

As we come into the season, we expect new challenges this season. First, we're all in the 2025 rule book. There have been many rules seminars around the area, but as judges, we need to be teachers and help sailors through the new rules with grace and kindness. Next, we're seeing technology as an ever-increasing part of our rules and race documents. Much time and discussion have surrounded learning from new technologies running starting lines. Finally, as we address these challenges, we will be interfacing with the Race Committee more and more to adapt to changes that aim to improve the competitor's experience.

I'm proud of our group and excited for all the great sailing coming to the Midwest this summer. Nationwide, let's focus on great experiences for competitors, growing the sport, and helping facilitate fair racing with a kind heart.



USEFUL LINKS

- [US Sailing Judges' Page](#)
- [The Racing Rules of Sailing 2025-2028](#)
- [US Sailing Appeals](#)
- [World Sailing Cases](#)
- [SOARS](#)
- [Safesport](#)
- [World Sailing](#)

RESOURCES

- [Find a Seminar](#)
- [US Sailing Judge Certification Requirements](#)
- [2025-2028 US Prescriptions to The Racing Rules of Sailing](#)
- [2025-29 RRS Changes that Affect Judging](#)
- [The Judges' Manual for 2021-2024](#) - **Latest version 02/2024**
- [Guidelines for Online Hearings](#)
- [Continuing Education Events and CEUs Table](#)
- [Race Officials Certification Forms](#)
- [Race Officials Insurance Information](#)
- [Race Official/Organizing Authority Connection Page](#)
- [New Hearing Request Form](#)
- [A Quick Overview of the Significant Rule and Game Changes in the 2025-28 RRS](#)

