

RRS 68

The Latest News from the Judges' Committee

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WELCOME TO THE JUDGES' NEWSLETTER 2025!

Sarah Ashton

The Sailing Season is waning as winter is fast approaching. This is a good time to brush up on all things judging. Check the [Find a Seminar calendar](#) or go to the [seminar/ course map](#).

Your Judges' Committee had the opportunity to "test-drive" the new Advanced Rule 42 Seminar. It is outstanding! I highly recommend that you sign up for the Seminar as soon as it rolls out. Sign up for new seminar notification [here](#).

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

I wish y'all a blissful Holiday season!



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Wayne Balsiger

November comes around faster every year.

Judges' Manual Updated: The Judges' Manual (October 11, 2025) is available on the Judges' Webpage. This update incorporated the 2025-2028 Case Book as well as other changes. We added a short section on Discretionary Penalties as well as a link to the new WS Discretionary Penalties policy. The Detailed Hearing Procedure is updated as well.

Rules 42 Endorsement Program - Breaking News: A while back, the Judges' Committee removed Rule 42 experience as a requirement for NJ certification. We intended to create an endorsement (similar to a Motorcycle Endorsement), so everyone knows who has been trained on Appendix P1 / Rule 42 Observer. Eventually, this will be noted in Find-a-Race Official. This Endorsement program was approved in June.

We now have the Advanced Rule 42 Seminar and exam for this. Watch the seminar schedule for it being offered later this year. That is the first step to being endorsed.

This outlines the program: Rule 42 Endorsement requirements include:

- a) Being certified as a race official at any level.
- b) Attending an Advanced Rule 42 Seminar with positive references from the instructors.
- c) Passing the Rule 42 examination.
- d) Serving as an on-the-water judge for Rule 42 under Appendix P1 for at least four events, of which two shall be regional or national events during the past four years.
- e) Receiving two references from a Rule 42 event Chief Judge or their designated representative.

Renewal is not required.

All are required to meet the above requirements for earning the endorsement, with the exceptions of International Judges and International Umpires.

SOARS Records: Check on SOARS for this year and next year. Check your SOARS for when your SafeSport and Background check expires. Add a reminder in your calendar. No Email reminders on Background checks. For SafeSport, the reminder emails have been fixed, so you should get one... but add to your calendar.

Does your certification expire in 2025 or 2026? Sometimes we let other Chair hearings, so often we come up short on having Chaired when we are recertifying. Always good to check where you are on hearings, Chaired hearings, and CEUs, as well as out-of-area events for NJs. I was at a recent event and let others Chair. I realized I need to check where I am on Chaired hearings for my next recert.

Create a SOARS Event: It is good practice for the Chief Judge to make sure a SOARS record is created, either by you or a designated member of the jury. I usually create them, and then I send a note to jury members with a screenshot of the entry in SOARS.

Future Judges: Do you know someone who may be interested in judging? Encourage them and let your RAJ know about them as well. We are always looking for more Judges, and many clubs do not have any certified judges as members. And sometimes all the judges are busy, and it can be hard to find a judge for a major regional event. The more the merrier.

I hope you enjoy the upcoming holidays and continue adding events and education CEUs with our Protest Days, Round Tables and other Seminars. In 2026, we plan to offer more Club Judge and Advanced Judge Seminars than we have in the last several years. If you want to host one any of these events, let your RAJ know. They know how to set up an event.

Cheers, Wayne Balsiger, Chair webalsiger@gmail.com

EXPLORING EXPEDITED HEARINGS

Giff Constable, Area B RAJ

Are adults filing fewer protests? We don't have robust data on this, but an anecdotal poll of judges from different regions of the country raised the strong possibility. If a downward trend is because people understand the rules better, are sailing cleaner, and are doing their penalty turns, then great! However, if this is because adult sailors are reluctant to go through the full protest hearing process because it feels onerous or stressful, then we should be concerned. Without accountability to the rules in our sport, we risk a race to the bottom in terms of bad behavior, which would only serve to push people out.

That opening question led a small working group of the Judges Committee to explore how expedited hearing procedures — not arbitration but an actual decision made without the full structure of Part 5 — show up in the wild. The most well-known version of an expedited hearing is “3 Minute Justice”. This is often used for youth regattas and team racing, but also put into service at adult events ranging from local club championships to the highly popular San Diego Yacht Club's Women's Winter Invitational.

Expedited hearings have some benefits: they are less intimidating to sailors and less disruptive to the timing and flow of regatta events. Where arbitration explicitly only provides an opinion within the constraints of Appendix T, this actually gives a result.

However, expedited hearings also come with dangers. Like arbitration, they aren't suited for complex incidents or situations where real damage has occurred. They also skip over the procedural protections that are in place to protect sailors and keep things fair. Lastly, from a race documents perspective, most of the implementations we saw skipped over the requirements of RRS 85.1 on handling rule changes.

We have 3 key takeaways, particularly for those serving in the role of Chief Judge. First, make sure an expedited hearing approach makes sense for the regatta and consider building in an escalation path to a full hearing for more complex incidents. Second, as with arbitration, make sure that only very experienced judges are handling expedited hearings. And third, double-check that the language for the expedited process in the race documents is in accordance with RRS 85.1.



At the SDYC's Women's Winter Invitational, expedited hearings happen on the dock between races, led by a National Judge

Clark Chapin, Area E RAJ

Situation

In an individual race not part of a series Boat A on port is attempting to cross Boat B on starboard. They are around 5th and 6th place in a twenty boat fleet. Boat B has to take avoiding action to avoid Boat A and capsizes whilst doing so. Boat A takes a two turn penalty as soon as reasonably possible and has dropped to 12th place but is still ahead Boat B who has dropped to around 15th place after righting her boat. There is no damage or injury on either boat.

Question

Has Boat A gained a significant advantage in the race as she is ahead of Boat B after the incident?

Answer

No.

RRS 44.1(b) is applicable only when a boat “gains a significant advantage in the race or series” (emphasis added). Since in this case Boat A has dropped from 5th place before the incident to 12th place after the incident, she has not gained an advantage in the race. And, since there is only one race, Boat A has also not gained an advantage in the series. If there was more than one race, a boat may gain an advantage in the series despite not gaining an advantage in the individual race. In that case, the effect of the change of positions on the boat’s series scores’ would need to be considered.

Note that this answer is limited to fleet racing which is not umpired under Appendix MR or Appendix UF. These appendices include a further provision allowing an umpire initiated penalty for ‘gaining an advantage despite taking a penalty’ without the need for that advantage to be significant nor for it to be specifically ‘in a race or series’ (MR4.1(c) and UF3.4(a)(3) respectively)

Commentary (Clark Chapin, USA NJ):

This seems to leave the determination of “significant advantage” still in a gray area. Here we find that an infringing boat that was in fifth or sixth prior to the incident doesn’t gain a significant advantage if she drops to mid-pack but gains three positions on her rival, but what about if the boats were vying for the lead at the time of the incident?



HAPPENINGS IN AREA C

Harry Foote

What a wonderful surprise to have an extended Indian Summer in the Area. Summer programs and series have wrapped up, but the fall action has not only been good, it has been very pleasant. As I pen this article, it is near 80 degrees, and the high school competition is nearing its wrap up. The Division races are scheduled for the last weekend in October.

One of the most interesting regattas we had was A Wazp regatta hosted by the Toms River Yacht Club. With the Bot marks and the computerized starting system, the PRO joked that we could run the regatta from the deck of the yacht club. Obviously, we didn't, but the racing was exciting.

Having judged many of these events, I recall the article in the last newsletter from Area B and Giff discussed the shortage of judges and methods to entice more folks to explore being a judge. I have reached out to the local high school coaches and invited them to the Club Judge seminar we are having on November 1st, led by Darryll Waskow. Their sailors are well coached and rule savvy, and the talent these folks have could be a great assistance. The only pushback is that their schedule is still ongoing in early November. I will keep looking for ways to attract them and possibly their sailors going forward. If anyone has a suggestion or practice that has been successful, please share.



USEFUL LINKS

- [US Sailing Judges' Page](#)
- [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](#)
- [2025-28 RRS Changes that Affect Judging](#)
- [The Judges' Manual for 2025-2028](#) - **Latest version 10/11/25**
- [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](#)

