

RRS 68

The Latest News from the Judges' Committee

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WELCOME TO THE JUDGES' NEWSLETTER 2026!

Sarah Ashton

Happy New Year to all. I hope your #1 resolution is to sail faster!

Welcome, Chairman Edith Collins!

Mark Townsend, Chairman of JETTS, will be contributing racing rules of sailing quizzes to RRS 68. Thank you, Mark.

It is not too early to check your renewal status. If you do renew at the end of this year, it is time to start verifying that you have completed all your recertification qualifications. Check the [recertification chart](#) and ensure that your SOARS are up to date.

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

Edith Collins

Happy New Year!!!

I am humbled to have been appointed as the Chair of the Judges' Committee. For those of you who do not already know me, I live north of Atlanta, Georgia, at Lake Lanier. I was first certified as a judge in 2001 and became what was then called a "Senior" (now National) judge in 2010. I served as the Area Coordinator of Area D for two terms and as the RAJ of Area D for two terms.

I want to give my heartfelt thanks to my predecessor, Wayne Balsiger, for all the hard work and dedication as Chair over the last four years. He set a very high bar. I will be leaning on him for help and guidance. The good news is that he will now be the Chair of the Race Administration Committee, so he will still be involved. Wayne has an "exit interview" article in this newsletter. He also has a very important article titled "Did you have a collision with damage? Advice for sailors and judges." The advice in this article could be life-changing!

Also, thank you to our departing RAJs, Mary Pearce from Area A and Chris Luppens from Area F. Both of you made a real difference to the committee and the sport. You will be missed! Please welcome our two new RAJs: Bill Collins (no relation to me) in Area A, and Shannon Wood Bush in Area F. They both bring a wealth of experience. I am very excited about their being on the team!

We are finishing 2025 with a total of 289 certified judges, and 2026 will bring exciting new educational opportunities. There is now a "Rule 42/appendix P" Clinic being offered. For as long as I have been a judge, there has been a desire to have a Rule 42/Appendix P "endorsement. My mentor, the late R. Means Davis, Jr., was a big proponent, but the traction just wasn't there. Now, thanks to the hard work of the subcommittee, the dream has been realized. The clinic was previewed for the committee members last month and has since been fine-tuned. The first clinic will be held via Zoom on January 27th. Jerry Thomson and the other committee members have done a great job. Another new offering will be Jerry Thompson's "rules for judges" seminar held on February 10th and 12th. Since winter is seminar season, please review the calendar for other continuing education offerings.

It never hurts to be reminded to check when your certification renews. Go to SOARS and make sure all of your events and hearings are listed, and when your SafeSport and background check expire, as well as your US Sailing membership. Also, if you are a "sailor athlete" (as defined on the website), please let your RAJ know.

Thank you for all that you do to make the sport of sailing better for all of us.

Edith H. Collins
Chair Judges' Committee



PAST CHAIRMAN'S THOUGHTS

Wayne Balsinger

Wow, as I often say, the year goes by fast. Wow, four years went by as well as 13 years on the Judges' Committee.

I have enjoyed working with each of you on or being on the Judges' Committee over the years. I became RAJ Area L in 2013, in 2019, Secretary for two years, Vice-Chair for one, and Chair for four years, for a total of thirteen years.

As a committee, we have made good progress and produced results, including updating the RAJ Guide, making multiple revisions to the Judges' Manual, creating new policies and guidelines, and organizing many new CEU events. We initiated improvements to several US Sailing Policies. We created and added several documents to the Guidelines and Documents section, including Difficult Conversations, the Addendum on minimum US Prescriptions for International events, and updated others. The Racing Rules Committee has entrusted us with the responsibility of revising the Hearing Decision form.

We created the Rule 42 Endorsement along with the Rule 42 appendix P clinic required for the endorsement. And now, more Racing Rules material for teaching them. These and others are among the good works we have done. CEUs for Certified race Officials are free thanks to our prompting, then President Rich Jepsen and Charlie Arms, and the Board of Directors agreeing. Although no longer free, we did locate new insurance available at a significant discount for Race Officials.

Over the years, we have implemented Steve Wrigley's vision to create educational opportunities so that a recertifying judge does not have to retake the Judge seminar. Bill Simon, as the former Chair of JETTS, oversaw much of that.

Credit to Sarah Ashton, who took the idea of a JC Newsletter to a wonderfully new level in the RRS-68 newsletter, which we receive every two months. Much of the history of what we have accomplished is mentioned in these newsletters. All copies are on the website. Sarah continues as editor at the four-year mark of editing and publishing it. Sarah, the committee again thanks you for all your work on it.

I think the Judges' Committee is in good hands with Edith Collins as Chair. She has good people as RAJs and everyone on the Judges Education, Teaching and Testing subcommittee (JETTS). Darryl Waskow continues to do well as our IJ Candidate mentor.

I am now the Chair of the Race Administration Committee. Thanks to Sandy Grosvenor for her workably leading it for the last four years.

Wayne Balsinger webalsinger@gmail.com



A COLLISION WITH DAMAGE? Advice for sailors and judges

Sailors: Did you have a collision with damage? You need a protest hearing, especially if there is serious damage or injury.

Many insurance companies want to see the protest committee's decision on who broke the rules and is at fault. If the damage is likely to involve an insurance claim, it is important to obtain a good protest hearing and a good written decision.

Dick Rose wrote an article in Sailing World magazine many years ago stating that the protest committee, as the rules experts, should determine what happened on the water and apply the rules, not the courts. This is still true today.

Before you race: You may not like protesting, but you need to know how to protest on the water and where to find your red protest flag if your boat is over 6 meters long.

On the water: It is essential that you protest on the water whenever there is a collision. You must follow the procedures in rule 60.2 and notify the RC when finishing if the sailing instructions so state. In short: hail protest, fly the protest flag (boat over 6 meters), notify the RC. Know if the sailing instructions require notifying the race committee after finishing.

On shore: First thing, look up the protest time limit in the sailing instructions. Then file a written protest before the time limit. Rule 60.3 requires the protest to identify the protestor, the protestee, and the incident. You don't need a lot of extra detail - the incident description needs only to be sufficient that the other boat and the protest committee know what the protest is about. Double-check that the boats, race number, and day are all correct.

Note: You want a hearing to be held, and you can have a valid protest heard, even if one or both boats took a penalty (retiring, turns, scoring, or other post-race penalties before the hearing). Make sure you have photos of the damage and, if possible, an estimate of repair costs for the hearing, so the protest committee has adequate information to make their decision.

After racing, you may realize the damage is much more extensive than you thought on the water, even if you continued racing with little performance impact. And we all know repairs cost more than we expect.

An insurance broker told us, "Insurance carriers often ask for a report from the protest committee or police stating who was at fault. Police reports rarely state who is at fault. If you don't have a protest decision, the boat owner's insurance company is left paying out on the claim with no real recourse of going to the other boat's carrier, and then either raises the boat owner's premium or drops him."

The competitor should file the protest as stated above. If you (the boat involved in the collision) failed to file a protest, you may still have a remedy, but it depends on the protest committee. Talk to the protest committee (chair). If they learn of serious damage or injury, even after the protest time limit, they can file a protest against both boats and hear the protest (see rule 60.4(c)(1)). But it is their decision to file, not yours.

Finally, if your boat has been physically damaged, or a crew member injured, by a boat that was required to keep clear and has taken a penalty or has been penalized by the protest committee, you may be eligible for redress as well (see rule 61.4(b)(2) or (3)).

COLLISION WITH DAMAGE cont.

Protest Committee (PC): When there is damage, the PC is encouraged to hear the protest and prepare a clear and complete decision. If injury or serious damage may exist, ensure the PC has experienced judges. It may make sense to delay the hearing to allow time to gather damage information. Serious damage is discussed in WS Case 141.

PC filed protest: If the PC learns of an incident involving a boat that may have resulted in injury or serious damage, rule 60.4(c)(1) allows the PC to protest both boats. Rule 60.4(c) says that the validity requirements in Rule 60.4(b) do not apply to a protest from the PC. So the PC can learn of the possible injury or serious damage from any source, including a boat with a conflict of interest, an invalid protest, a boat in the collision, or hearing about it in the parking lot, even after the protest time limit.

The PC can then file a protest against both boats, as provided in Rule 60.4(c)(1). A PC can decide there is a good reason to extend the protest time limit if they are protesting under 60.4(c)(1), (2) or (3).

The US Sailing Prescription for rule 65.1(b) states: "A protest committee shall find facts and make decisions only in compliance with the rules. No protest committee or US Sailing appeal authority shall adjudicate any claim for monetary damages. Such a claim is subject to the jurisdiction of the courts." While this means the PC does not decide who directly pays, the PC is involved because it determines what happened and which boat(s) violated The Racing Rules of Sailing. As Dick Rose said in his article, we want the PC to decide what happened on the water, not the courts.

Note: This article is the short version, and some nuances are not covered. The more extended version will likely be on the Judges' page in the future. Additional information is available in Dave Perry's Understanding the Racing Rules of Sailing through 2028. It is available from the US Sailing bookstore or through the US Sailing Racing Rules app.

Conclusion: If you may have serious damage or injury, know all the steps you must take to file a valid protest so you have the PC decision for your insurance carrier when you get your boat repaired.

Wayne Balsiger, Chair, Race Administration Committee, with input from Dave Perry, Peter Wilson, Sandy Grosvenor and Rob Overton.



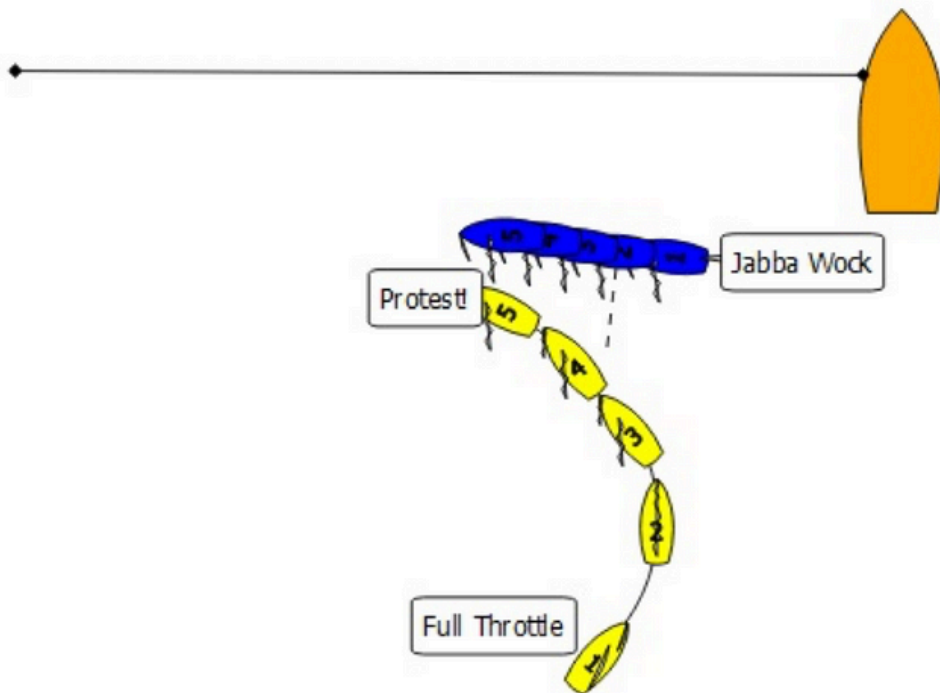
MARK'S RACING RULES #1

Mark Townsend, Chair JETTS Chairman

A minute before the starting signal, Jabba Wock is drifting slowly down the starting line, with its sails flapping approximately two hull lengths to leeward of the starting line. Full Throttle is on a port tack, about six hull lengths leeward of the starting line. Full Throttle tacks from port to starboard to leeward of Jabba Wock, putting them on a converging course. Without trimming its sails, Full Throttle continues to close on Jabba Wock, with both the main and jib flapping. Despite Full Throttle's hail of "windward boat," Jabba Wock keeps drifting down the starting line. As Full Throttle gets within a few feet of Jabba Wock's boom, she bears away to avoid contact, causing her sails to fill. Jabba Wock then hails "protest."

Full Throttle protests Jabba Wock for not keeping clear of a leeward boat. Jabba Wock says Full Throttle didn't complete her tack until her sails filled and until that time was a tacking boat and required to keep clear of her.

How should the protest committee rule. See if you can figure out the relevant facts, conclusions, and decision.



[Click here for the Answer.](#)

HAPPENINGS IN AREA D

Jerry Thompson

More judges needed!!

Area D includes nine states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. We have 235 sailing clubs in Area D. Of those, 30 are Remote Control (RC) sailing clubs. Click [here](#) for a Google Map which depicts the location of these clubs. Blue pins indicate South Atlantic Yacht Racing Association (SAYRA) clubs, Gold - Gulf Yachting Association (GYA), Green - Florida Sailing Association (FSA), Purple - Radio Control Racing clubs, and Red unaffiliated clubs.

Serving these 235 clubs are just 49 certified judges, along with nine Judges In Training (JIT). Arkansas and Mississippi have no certified judges. Alabama has just one certified judge. Louisiana and Tennessee each have just two certified judges.

Area D encompasses a vast geographic region ranging from the Atlantic coast of the Carolinas to the inland lakes of Tennessee and Arkansas, down to the Gulf Coast. The logistical challenge of coverage is exacerbated by the current ratio of judges to clubs.

Mathematically, the coverage capacity is critically low:

$$\text{Coverage Ratio} = \frac{49 \text{ Certified Judges}}{235 \text{ Sailing Clubs}} \approx 0.21 \text{ Judges per Club}$$

This ratio implies that for every five sailing clubs in Area D, only one certified judge is available. Consequently, the burden of officiating falls repeatedly on a small group of individuals, or regattas proceed without certified oversight, potentially compromising the fairness of competition.

To solve the shortage, we must understand why sailors do not pursue certification:

- The "Intimidation Factor": Many sailors view the protest room as adversarial and legalistic rather than educational.
- Cost and Time: The financial burden of travel, combined with the time commitment for seminars and testing, is a significant deterrent.

We must all work to recruit judges. Inviting a potential candidate to observe a hearing is a start. Then once the hook is set, mentor and encourage the candidate. Navigating the certification process is made easier when someone who has been through the process works with the candidate to meet all requirements.

Increasing the number of certified judges in Area D is not merely a logistical necessity; it is a cultural imperative for the sport. By moving from judges per club to a target of judges per club (approx. 117 judges), Area D can ensure high-quality racing, reduce travel costs for organizers, and prevent burnout among the dedicated 49 officials currently serving the region.

The solution lies in making the pathway to certification accessible, affordable, and educational rather than administrative.

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](#)



ANSWER - MARK'S RACING RULES QUIZ #1

REASON FOR DECISION

Initially, Full Throttle is on a port tack and keeps clear of Jabba Wock on a starboard tack, in accordance with rule 10, On Opposite Tacks. Full Throttle then luffs and passes through head to wind, becoming a tacking boat, and must keep clear of Jabba Wock under rule 13, While Tacking. Upon completing the tack and reaching a close-hauled course at position 3, Full Throttle becomes the right-of-way boat.

The fact that Full Throttle's sails are not filled is irrelevant. As the leeward right-of-way boat under rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped, Full Throttle initially gives Jabba Wock sufficient room to keep clear, as required by Rule 15, Acquiring Right of Way. Jabba Wock, however, makes no effort to sheet in and keep clear.

When Full Throttle bears away to avoid contact at position 5, Jabba Wock breaks rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped. The sails filling only when Full Throttle bears away is inconsequential. Jabba Wock infringes Rule 11 and will be penalized.

Once Full Throttle reaches a close-hauled course, Jabba Wock must take immediate, seamanlike action to avoid contact, as required by rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped. While rule 15, Acquiring Right of Way provides brief protection to Jabba Wock after Full Throttle acquires right of way, rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped demands immediate avoiding action, which Jabba Wock fails to take.

RULES THAT APPLY

1. Definitions, Room
2. Rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped
3. Rule 13, While Tacking
4. Rule 15, Acquiring Right of Way
5. World Sailing Case 13.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Jabba Wock to windward failed to keep clear of Full Throttle to leeward and broke RRS 11.

DECISION

1. Jabba Wock is DSQ.

See you on the water. Mark Townsend

