

RRS 68

The Latest News from the Judges' Committee

In This Newsletter:

[Chairman's Corner](#)

Page 02

[NASO](#)

Page 03

[Rule 18](#)

Page 04

[IJ Seminar](#)

Page 05

[Rule Quiz 137](#)

Page 06

[Area F](#)

Page 07

[Quiz Answer](#)

Page 08

[Useful Links](#)

Page 09



WELCOME TO THE JUDGES' NEWSLETTER

Sarah Ashton

This edition is packed full of useful information, including Mark's Racing Rules of Sailing Quiz created by Mark Townsend, Chairman of the Judges' Training and Testing Working Party and International Judge. You are receiving two formats of RRS 68: a PDF and a link. The link allows the diagram to be animated. Enjoy.

If you are admiring the photos in this and past issues, please thank Priscilla Parker. She has graciously provided me with the majority of the photos for our newsletter, [PriscillaParker](#).

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

Spring has sprung! At my lake in Northeast Georgia, the “yellow tide” (pollen) is subsiding. Hopefully, the weather is getting better where you are and your sailing season is in full swing. It was great being at Charleston Race Week this past week. I am off to the Alabama Gulf Coast to work Optis this week and working on beautiful Lake Keowee in upstate South Carolina next week. I just hope my Husband and cats don't forget who I am.

Keep your fingers crossed, I am getting my first Rule 42/Appendix P evaluation at the Opti event. Two positive evaluations are required, as well as taking the course and passing the test. You also need to have worked 4 appendix P events (two regional or higher) in the last 4 years. I am very excited about that certification. That had been a dream of my mentor, Means Davis, for a very long time. I am just sad that he is not around to see it come to fruition. It is a work in progress, and it is progressing very nicely.

There are several other educational offerings coming up. Search [US Sailing Find a Seminar](#) to see what is being offered. There are many roundtable offerings, club judge seminars, Rule 42/Appendix P clinics, and an advanced judge seminar, being offered to name a few.

There is an International Judges Seminar from World Sailing in the US this year. It will be held at Macatawa Yacht Club in Michigan, September 25-27th. That is near Holland, Michigan. If you are interested in attending that seminar, please contact your RAJ. You need to be approved to attend the seminar. More information about this seminar is in this newsletter. I attended the seminar in Atlanta a few years ago, and it was an incredible learning and networking opportunity.

The members of the Judges' Committee are concerned about attracting new judges and retaining the ones we have. Darryl Waskow has offered to lead a strategic planning committee to address our goals as judges. Two of the goals are:

- What we do: serve the racing sailors by providing fair racing
- How we do it: Providing enough well-trained, qualified judges to serve the racing sailors.

I would very much like your feedback on how you think we should be reaching these goals. Please email me with your thoughts. I particularly want to hear from the “grass roots” folks. What is working, what is not? We don't know if you don't let us know. If you are new to judging, how have we met or not met your expectations? How can we better support your journey?

Thank you for your time, effort and Passion,

Edith Collins,

Chairman Judges' Committee Edith@benefitalt.com



NASO: Insurance AND Information

Shannon Bush, Area F RAJ

When US Sailing lost the insurance coverage for race officials, the National Association of Sports Officials, or NASO, entered the chat.

NASO provides insurance for sports officials of ALL sports. The added bonus is the monthly edition of Referee magazine (also found online). I usually don't read trade magazines, but I read this one; there are some real gems to be found inside!

The magazine caters to sports officials of a multitude of sports (but generally, not sailing), yet a number of their articles focus on topics we, in the sailing community, can certainly benefit from reading: how to keep your mental focus during a game, mobility, stretching and strength exercises, and the image you project to athletes. The November 2025 edition featured an article entitled "Elevator Pitch," in which leading sports officials (some professional and some volunteer) gave their pitch on how to get others into officiating; the article concluded by asking readers to submit their short "elevator pitch." The light bulb went on: ALL sports are in the same situation as sailing, with the inevitable aging of our race officials and very few younger people in the pipeline to become officials.

The January 2026 edition was packed with excellent reading ("Battling Unsportsmanlike Behavior" and "Watch Your Tongue"), discussing how to keep your cool when dealing with upset players/coaches/parents. In the February 2026 edition, "50 Reasons Why; For Those Who Answer the Call, Nothing Compares to What We Give and Gain" spelled out what all sports officials have in common: giving back to the sport. The March 2026 edition had an article on burnout...too soon before the spring/summer regatta schedule!

Then, the April 2026 edition featured "Elevator Pitch II" with some of the best responses from the November '25 edition. I admit I had not even opened the magazine when Sandy Grosvenor texted me a photo of the article and my quote, saying "I know her!" Here is what I submitted:

- Being a race official means you care enough to ensure the future of the sport. We can't all become paid professional sailors. Some of us have chosen to give back to the sport. Without race officials to run races or judge the competitions, there wouldn't be regattas. Consider giving back. With your knowledge as a sailor, you know what the competitors expect. Plus, it's a guaranteed front row seat to the action!

[Not satisfied with merely talking about the issue, NASO has a website dedicated to their program (Say Yes to Officiating), to encourage new officials to get involved.

www.sayyestoofficiating.com]

The new pro-rated and heavily discounted price for NASO membership (including insurance) until 8/4/26 is \$38.

The direct link is <https://join.naso.org/NAS/?f=PaidUSSailing>.

The link to the insurance page, with FAQs on the policy, is

<https://www.ussailing.org/competition/rules-officiating/resources/competition-rules-officiating-resources-insurance-for-race-officials/>.



RULE 18: THE PROTEST ROOM'S FAVORITE HEADACHE (AND WHY JUDGES CAN'T ESCAPE IT)

Don Wieneke, Area G RAJ

If you sit on a protest committee for any length of time, you'll discover a pattern that is both predictable and slightly alarming: no matter what incident is brought before you—no matter how it begins—often it will, somehow, become about Rule 18. And not in a gentle, educational way. In a “we've now spent 40 minutes arguing about three boat lengths, and everyone is tired” kind of way.

Spend five minutes browsing [RacingRulesOfSailing.org](https://www.racingrulesofsailing.org), and you'll see exactly the same thing. The most persistent, repeated, and occasionally soul-draining question is not what happened, but when Rule 18 applied—and whether it applied at all. Because here's the reality for judges: Rule 18 is not just a rule. It is a triggered condition. And your entire decision often hinges on identifying the exact moment that the trigger fired—or didn't.

Everything comes down to the zone. That innocent-sounding three-length circle around the mark is, in practice, where clarity goes to die. Your job as a protest committee is to determine one deceptively simple fact: what was the relationship between the boats when the first of them reached the zone? Were they overlapped? Was one clear ahead? Did that overlap exist in time, or was it established just a hair too late?

And here's the problem: no one agrees.

You'll hear:

- “We were overlapped the whole time.”
- “No, he came in late.”
- “I was already at the mark.”
- “He luffed me into it.”

At which point you realize you are not just applying rules—you are reconstructing a forensic timeline of a moving target in wind and current, using human memory, which is famously unreliable even when people are standing still.

And this is why Rule 18 dominates discussions about judging. Because once you get the facts at zone entry, everything else follows. Get that wrong, and the rest of the decision becomes beautifully reasoned—and completely incorrect.

Of course, it would be too easy if Rule 18 simply applied every time boats approached a mark. It does not. It turns off in certain situations—most notably when boats are on opposite tacks on a beat to windward. Which leads to one of the protest room's greatest hits: a competitor confidently asserting a right to mark-room that, legally speaking, does not exist.

Then there's the interaction with other rules. Because Rule 18 does not operate in isolation—it collides, overlaps, and occasionally arm-wrestles with Rules 10, 11, and 12.



RULE 18 cont.

Outside the zone, standard right-of-way rules apply. Inside the zone, if Rule 18 is active, it may modify those rights. Which means your findings of fact must be precise enough to determine not just what happened, but which rule set was even in force at the time. And just when you think you've got it sorted, someone introduces Rule 19—obstructions. Now you're deciding whether the mark rounding was governed by mark-room or obstruction room, or some delicate transition between the two. At this point, the hearing has effectively become a graduate seminar in applied sailing logic.

Then comes the classic misunderstanding: room vs. mark-room. Competitors routinely treat these as interchangeable, when in reality they are very different. Mark-room is narrower. It entitles a boat to space to sail to and around the mark in a seamanlike way—not to execute a tactical masterpiece at someone else's expense.

A well-written decision will often hinge on explaining that distinction clearly, because for many competitors, that is where their mental model diverged from the rule.

So, what does all this mean for a protest committee?

It means discipline. Specifically:

- Find the moment of zone entry.
- Establish the relationship between the boats at that moment.
- Determine whether Rule 18 was on or off.
- Only then apply the rest of the rules.

Do that, and most Rule 18 cases become manageable. Skip a step, and you're essentially guessing with confidence. Which is why, in the end, Rule 18 isn't just the most frequently asked question—it's the most frequently misapplied answer. And for judges, mastering it isn't optional. It's the difference between a decision that resolves a dispute and one that quietly guarantees the next protest will be even more enthusiastic.

And if that sounds a bit dramatic, remember nothing in sailboat racing inspires more passion than being absolutely certain you were right—especially when you weren't.

Are you interested in becoming a World Sailing International Judge?

Macatawa Bay Yacht Club (Macatawa, MI) will host a US Sailing-sponsored International Judging Seminar on September 25-27, 2026, in conjunction with the VX One North American Championship.

The seminar is open to sailing judges who hold National Judge certification from their National Authority, and others with the approval of the US Sailing Judges Committee. Passing the IJ seminar is one of the qualifications for becoming a World Sailing International Judge. The registration fee is \$350 and the registration deadline is August 21.

For more information, please contact [Dale Gort](#) or [Cliff Black](#) at MBYC or [Matthew Hill](#) at US Sailing.

[Apply Today](#)

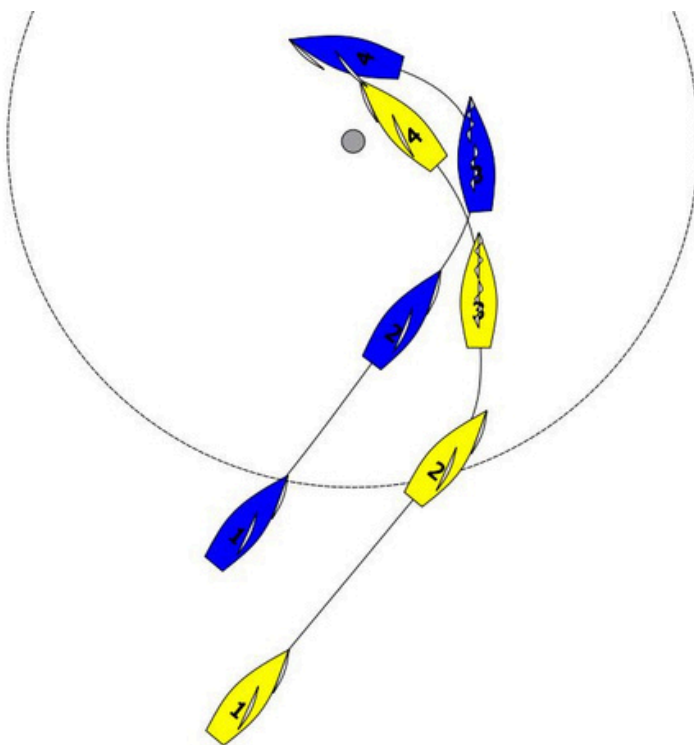
MARK'S RACING RULES OF SAILING QUIZ #134

Two boats, Out Of The Blue and Use Your Loaf, on port tack approached a mark to be rounded to port, with Out Of The Blue clear ahead of Use Your Loaf. Both boats tacked inside the zone, with Out Of The Blue passing head to wind before Use Your Loaf. Upon completing their tacks, they became overlapped, both on starboard tack, with Out Of The Blue to windward of Use Your Loaf. A collision occurred, that did not cause any damage.

Out Of The Blue protested. Neither boat took a penalty.

Out Of The Blue claimed that when she entered the zone, she was clear ahead and was entitled to mark-room. Use Your Loaf should be disqualified for breaking rule 18.

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

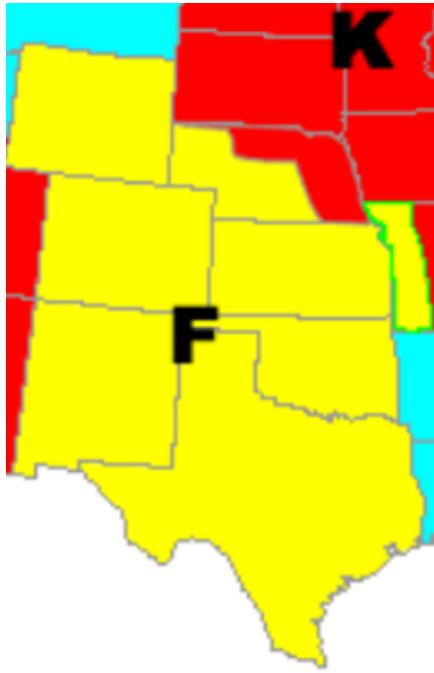


[ANSWER To MARK'S RACING RULES OF SAILING QUIZ #134](#)



HAPPENINGS IN AREA F

Shannon Bush



To echo others before me: we need more judges. Area F spans a vast portion of the middle of the country. To cover this, we have only 26 judges (7 JITs, 10 Club, 3 Regional and 6 National), with representation in Texas, Colorado and now Kansas. I would like to welcome John Flannery to the team! A recently discovered glitch in the scoring system of the online test meant that John actually passed the test - thank you for your understanding and willingness to continue to become a US Sailing judge!

The sailing season in the Southwest is already in full swing, with numerous events lining up throughout the spring and summer, especially in the Houston area. If you want to be involved, please contact me at swmadero@gmail.com. To see what's on the calendar in your neck of the woods, check the TSA Home or SAIL Home - Sailing Association of Intermountain Lakes. I even heard a rumor that someone in OK is interested in resurrecting the Central States Sailing Association - that would be amazing to revive that part of the country.

A gentle reminder: if you are hosting an event, please don't wait until the last moment to secure judges. Contact me and I can help find them for you. As always, don't forget to check the Judge's page on the US Sailing website, to see if there's a seminar or round table that suits your recertification needs.



©Bronny Daniels/Joysailing SDYC Womens Winter Invitational Regatta

ANSWER TO MARK'S RACING RULES OF SAILING QUIZ #134

When Out Of The Blue entered the zone clear ahead, Use Your Loaf was required to keep clear under rule 12 and to give Out Of The Blue mark-room under rule 18.2(a), which Use Your Loaf did. These obligations ended when Out Of The Blue passed head to wind, as rule 18 no longer applied (see rules 18.1(a)(1) and 18.2(b)). At that point, rule 13 applied to Out Of The Blue, requiring her to keep clear of Use Your Loaf, which she did.

When Use Your Loaf also passed head to wind, both boats were between head to wind and close-hauled simultaneously. Use Your Loaf, astern of Out Of The Blue, was required by rule 13 to keep clear, which she did. Use Your Loaf broke no rules.

At this moment, the boats were again on the same tack, and rule 18 applied between them. However, since the conditions of the first sentence of rule 18.3 were satisfied, rule 18.2 did not apply. As both boats bore away, Out Of The Blue, now the right-of-way boat, was required by rule 16.1 to give Use Your Loaf room to keep clear, which it did. Once both boats reached a close-hauled course, Use Your Loaf became the right-of-way boat under rule 11, requiring Out Of The Blue to keep clear. Out Of The Blue failed to do so, despite having room, leading to contact that could have been avoided. Therefore, Out Of The Blue broke rules 11 and 14.

RULES THAT APPLY

- Rule 11, On The Same Tack, Overlapped
- Rule 13, While Tacking
- Rule 18.2(a), Mark-Room: Giving Mark-Room
- Rule 18.2(b), Mark-Room: Giving Mark-Room
- Rule 18.3, Mark-Room: Tacking in the Zone

CONCLUSIONS

Out Of The Blue to windward failed to keep clear of Use Your Loaf to leeward, and broke RRS 11. Out Of The Blue did not avoid contact with Use Your Loaf even though it was reasonably possible, and broke RRS 14(a). Since Out Of The Blue passed head to wind, she was no longer entitled to mark-room in accordance with RRS 18.2(b). After Out Of The Blue passed head to wind from port to starboard tack inside the zone, RRS 18.2 did not apply between her and Use Your Loaf, who was on starboard tack and fetching the mark.

DECISION

Out Of The Blue is DSQ

See you on the water.

Mark Townsend



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](#)

