

RRS 68

The Latest News from the Judges' Committee

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WELCOME TO THE JUDGES' NEWSLETTER

Sarah Ashton

This edition includes some insight into autonomous marks penned by Giff Constable and Mark Townsend, and the ever-popular Mark's Racing Rules of Sailing Quiz. You are receiving two formats of RRS 68: a PDF and a link that allows the Quiz diagram to be animated.

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

Hopefully, you are having a great summer. The judges' committee has been busy.

For those of you who are "veteran" National Judges, a new policy was adopted at the last committee meeting: "Veteran National judges" (those renewing their National judge certification with 3 preceding consecutive terms (12 years) as a National Judge) may be exempted from taking the advanced judges' test if they have completed at least 160 CEUS with 40 CEUs coming from racing rules seminars focused on the rules of the current quadrennium at the time of renewal. US Sailing will offer rules seminars to fulfill this requirement. Jerry Thompson is offering a seminar via Zoom starting on October 19th. I will email each of you in the "Veteran National Judge" category whose certification expires on 12/31/26 to remind you of the new provision.

The committee approved our first candidates for the new Appendix P endorsement! Congratulations to Michael Balay, Area A; Warren Collier, Area D; Giff Constable, Area B; and Mike Kaspar, Area K. Look for Jerry Thompson's article about "how to get your Appendix P endorsement" later in this newsletter. Also, congratulations to Peter Chirilan of Area C for becoming a National Judge.

I want to remind you of the upcoming International Judge seminar. It will be held September 25-27 in Holland, Michigan. If you are interested in attending, please let your RAJ know.

We are developing ways to make it easier to enter the judge "pipeline". Darryl Waskow led a "strategic planning committee" that came up with some great ideas for getting new folks interested in starting the journey. These recommendations need to be approved by the Race Administration Committee, so stay tuned!

Nancy Glover is working very hard to coordinate interesting and fun roundtables. Please let her know what you want to see presented. Please look at the seminar calendar for other educational offerings.

I hope that everyone has a fun and safe Independence Day, and that your summer is filled with great days on the water.

Thanks for your passion for the sport we love!

Edith Collins,
Chairman Judges' Committee Edith@benefitalt.com



LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR RACE OFFICIALS

Matt Hill, US Sailing Race Administration

The National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) has again partnered with US Sailing to offer a discounted membership for certified race officials that includes liability insurance. NASO is a membership organization that provides services and publications to officials and works with sport governing bodies, including Equestrian, Rugby, Water Polo, Volleyball, US Youth Soccer, USA Pickleball, and USTA.

Whether you need insurance may depend on the kind of officiating you do and other coverage you may have in place. If you work mainly at your own club and are comfortable with the club's insurance program, you may not need additional coverage. If you officiate at multiple venues or are uncomfortable with the level of coverage at your home club, you may want additional coverage. If so, it may make sense for you to join NASO.

If you have questions about NASO membership and liability insurance, please review this [FAQ document](#) and review the [NASO website](#). If you still have questions, please feel free to email Ken Koester of NASO at kkoester@referee.com or insurance@ussailing.org.

The discounted NASO annual membership fee is \$79 for US Sailing officials and the policy renews in the beginning of August. This is a significant reduction in the standard annual membership of \$134.

If you are interested in joining NASO for the first time, please visit <https://join.naso.org/NAS/?f=PaidUSSailing>. At this time, you can join for the remainder of this policy year for a pro-rated price of \$38.

To renew your policy, please wait for the renewal notice from NASO, coming soon. If you have joined in the past, entering your NASO account number and the email you previously used will make the process easier.

We will continue to evaluate the changing insurance landscape. We are pleased to have this option for those who want additional race official insurance, and we encourage you to explore whether the NASO program is right for your situation.

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/>.



On RULE 31 HEARINGS

Giff Constable, RAJ Area B

In our scenario, a boat protests another for hitting the weather mark and not taking a penalty. The protestor believes the protestee broke Rule 31. The protestee is convinced they did not hit the mark. Both parties have two witnesses.

The locations of everyone are as follows: the mark is a MarkSet bot, and the protestee is the yellow boat in the dotted circle by the mark (the circle represents our uncertainty over the exact location of the boat and mark).



Prompts for you to think through:

1. What are the key pieces of information you want to learn?
2. What question(s) would you ask each of the parties and the witnesses?

Useful data to learn:

- How windy and wavy was it out there? This will affect how much the boats and the marks are moving around.
- How much current was there and in which direction? This will also affect the movement of both boats and the mark.
- What kind of boat(s) are we talking about? Is there anything important about their shapes or setup that might affect our balance of probabilities?
- What kind of mark are we talking about? They move on the water in different ways, and they protrude in different ways.
- Where was the protestor located, and did they have a clear view?
- How does the protestee describe their rounding?
- Where were the witness boats located, and did they have a close and clear view from that position, and their placement on their boat?
- For the protestor and witnesses that believed they saw contact: where on the boat and where on the mark did the contact happen?
- Are there any relevant relationships between any of the witnesses and the parties? (i.e., same team, a person's coach, etc)

Tips on Questioning

We want to ask the exact same question to all 3 people who claimed to see contact (the protestor and both of their witnesses). Use some version of the following: "Exactly where on the mark did you see the contact and exactly where on the protestee's boat did the contact occur?"

If the mark is an unusual shape, like a marksetbot with its two pontoons, it would be worth having a simplified drawing of the mark as if you were viewing it from above. If the boat has specific features, say with wings like a 49er or Moth, it might be worth creating a simple drawing of that as well. That way the person giving testimony can point to the specific location of the contact.

Scenario Version 1:

Testimonies:

- 6-7 knots, flat water, light current going down the course
- Protestor: "As she rounded she eased her boom out and I'm confident it connected with the orange inflatable part. The tip of the boom was hidden behind the orange inflatable but I could see by the angle that it had to make contact."
- Protestee: "I came into the mark comfortably. I wasn't having to pinch up to round at all. I went around and headed towards the next mark. I never made contact."
- Protestor witness 1: "I was 4 boat lengths away coming and overstood. I saw the sailor easing their sail out as they rounded. It looked like the end of their boom hit the orange part of the mark and I heard the protestor yell, 'You hit the mark!'"
- Protestor witness 2: "I had totally overstood. I didn't have the best view under my sail but I heard someone yell 'you hit the mark' and when I looked I could see the sailor rounding really close to it."
- Protestee's witness says, "I looked behind me to see what kind of lead I had, and I saw her rounding at least a foot above the mark. The gap seemed pretty clear."
- Protestee's coach says, "I was 150 feet away and the rounding looked completely normal to me. There was no upturn or squeeze to get round the mark."

ON RULE 31 HEARINGS - cont.

The parties step out. The jury chair polls the panel: "Did they hit the mark or not?" Your answer?

Scenario Version 2:

Testimonies:

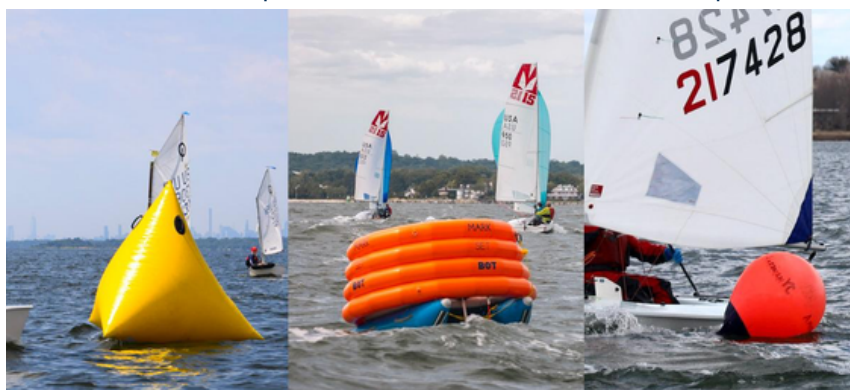
- 14-16 knots, 1 to 2 foot seas, half-knot of current going down the course
- Protestor: "I was about a boat length behind, overstood on the mark, and I saw the corner of her transom nick the blue pontoon sticking out of the bot."
- Protestee: "I came into the mark comfortably. I wasn't having to pinch up to round at all. I went around and headed towards the next mark. I never made contact."
- Protestor witness 1: "I was 4 boat lengths away coming in overstood. I was coming in high so could see past the protestor and I saw the left corner of their boat hit the blue pontoon, and I heard someone yell 'You hit the mark.'"
- Protestor witness 2: "I had totally overstood and so my sail was way out. I took a look to see if I could safely bear down to the mark and I saw the corner of the boat hit one of the blue things the bot floats on. Then I heard the yell for protest."
- Protestee's witness says, "I took a quick look behind and saw that they were rounding a bit behind me — maybe they had already rounded. The bot was obscured by her sail but it all looked normal to me."
- Protestee's coach says, "I was 100 feet away and the rounding looked completely normal to me. There was no upturn or squeeze to get round the mark."

The parties step out. The jury chair polls the panel: "Did they hit the mark or not?" Your answer?

My Take:

In the first scenario, the water is generally calm and the protestor and the witnesses did not have great visibility. On the other hand, the protestee's competitor witness did have a good view (the coach was too far away to add much). Given Appendix M's preamble stating that no boat is guilty until a breach of a rule has been established to the satisfaction of the protest committee, I would find the protestee innocent here.

In the second scenario, the situation is reversed. Not only would the mark be moving more in these conditions, but now the protestor and their witnesses have clear views and precise, consistent testimony. On the other hand, the protestee's competitor witness does not have a great view and the coach is too far away to have seen the situation with precision. I would find that the protestee broke rule 31.



AUTONOMOUS MARKS REDRESS

Mark Townsend IJ, IU, IRO

Autonomous marks, GPS-guided robotic buoys used in sailing to replace traditional anchored race marks, are increasingly used in regattas to speed course changes and reduce manual mark handling. They are designed to hold position without anchors, allowing for faster, more accurate course setting.

I have not found autonomous marks to be any more or less susceptible to movement than anchored marks. These movements are minor and should not be considered improper actions by the race committee. It is the responsibility of the sailor to make sure they leave sufficient room for the movement of the mark.

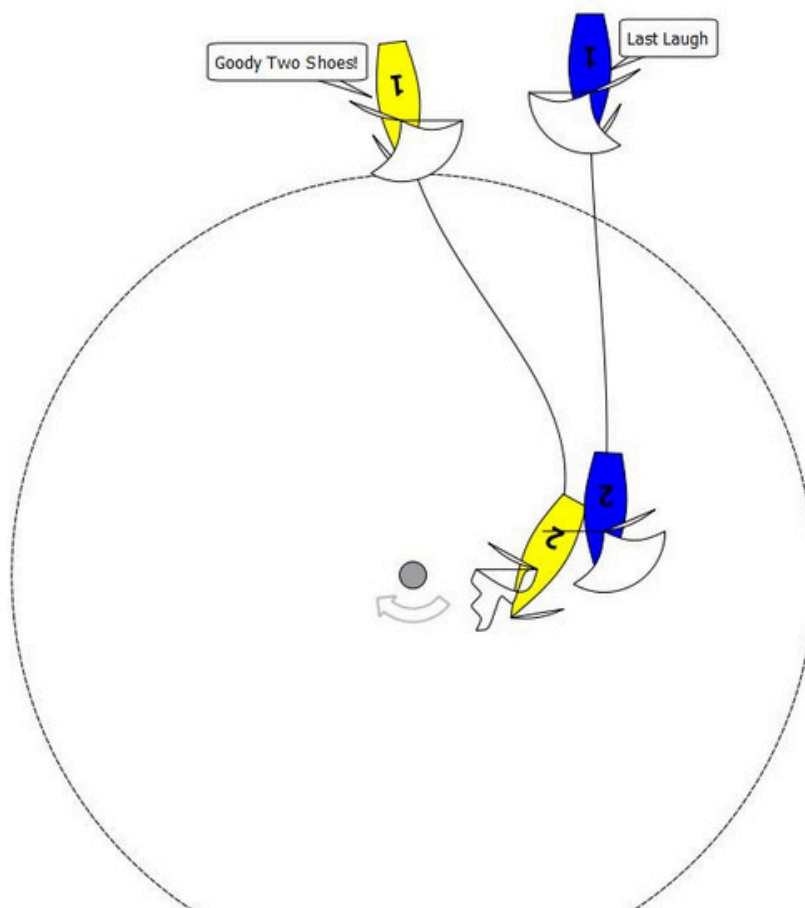
The following sailing instruction is recommended.

- ***Routine movement of the autonomous marks will not be considered an improper action of the race committee, so shall not be grounds for redress. This includes minor readjustments or marks returning to station after being pushed away by a boat.***

MARK'S RACING RULES OF SAILING QUIZ #129

Two boats, Last Laugh and Goody Two Shoes, were sailing directly downwind towards a leeward mark to be left to starboard. They had been overlapped for several lengths with Goody Two Shoes inside and slightly ahead. As Goody Two Shoes entered the zone, she luffed. As her bow came abreast of the mark she bore away to gybe, and there was contact, but no damage or injury. Last Laugh protested Goody Two Shoes under rule 10, while Goody Two Shoes protested Last Laugh under 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 G

Don Weineke, RAJ Area G

Area G in 2026: Judges in the Mix?

Let's start with the obvious question: What exactly is Area G?

No, it's not a secret government installation or a forgotten parking zone at the airport where you left your car on the way to the Regatta. Area G is US Sailing's Northern California and Nevada judging region—a remarkably dedicated collection of people who voluntarily work with hundreds of pages of racing rules and spend even more time in pursuit of the excellence required for judging sailboat racing.

The current Area G judge team includes one International Judge, nine National Judges, two Regional Judges, three Club Judges, and two Judges in Training. If you'd like to find any of them—or verify that these people actually exist—you can find the official directory here:

<https://www.ussailing.org/competition/rules-officiating/resources/find-a-race-official/>

Area G itself covers an enormous slice of the western United States. It stretches from Lake Tahoe and Nevada's inland lakes, through the Sacramento Delta, all the way west to the Pacific Ocean. That's a lot of water, a lot of wind, and—inevitably—a lot of opinions in the pursuit of excellence in judging. At the center of it all is San Francisco, one of the world's great sailing cities. Within roughly a ten-mile radius, you'll find more yacht clubs than almost anywhere else on the planet. Among the best-known clubs are the San Francisco Yacht Club and the St. Francis Yacht Club, both of which host outstanding racing programs that attract sailors from around the globe.

Events? They range from the spectacular to the spectacularly terrifying.

San Francisco has hosted everything from the America's Cup to world-class dinghy championships, from the Rolex Big Boat Series to the US Open Hydrofoil events. Whether your boat weighs a few hundred pounds or several tons—or you're standing on what looks suspiciously like a flying ironing board—there's a regatta waiting for you.

Which brings us to the rules.

Rules aren't there to spoil the fun. They're what make the fun possible. Without them, a sailboat race would quickly become an expensive version of supermarket shopping carts colliding in a windy parking lot.

Good rules provide structure. Better still, they provide confidence that everyone is playing the same game. Yes, the rules make the game (who said that :-)

But rules alone aren't enough. Eventually, someone believes another boat did something impossible, improbable, or completely illegal. That's where judges come in.

Judges are responsible for applying the Racing Rules of Sailing fairly, consistently, and impartially. They need a deep understanding of the rules, the ability to make accurate decisions under pressure, and perhaps most importantly, the patience to remain calm while competitors passionately explain why the other boat was "obviously" wrong.

US Sailing's Area G team and all judges really are committed to providing exactly that: a decisive, fair, and impartial decision for competitor disputes. Our judges work to ensure regattas are conducted fairly and consistently while also helping develop the next generation of judges. Whether you're already certified or just beginning your officiating journey, our goal is to provide mentoring, support, and practical experience so officials can continue progressing through the certification process and be prepared when they're called upon.

Because at the end of the day, clear rules, knowledgeable judges, and fair decisions keep sailors focused on what they came to do: race hard, compete fairly, and maybe argue a little less afterward. Please spread the word that the Area G team is always happy to help clubs, race officials, and judges throughout the region.

To learn more about US Sailing Judges, visit:

<https://www.ussailing.org/competition/rules-officiating/judges>

Or contact Donald Wieneke, RAJ, Area G, at dkwieneke@gmail.com.

ANSWER TO MARK'S RACING RULES OF SAILING QUIZ #129

FACTS

At position 1, when Goody Two Shoes hull reached the zone, Last Laugh and Goody Two Shoes were overlapped, and Last Laugh was required by rule 18.2(a) (1), Mark-Room: Giving Mark-Room, to give Goody Two Shoes mark-room and Goody Two Shoes was required by rule 10 to keep clear of Last Laugh.

The mark-room that Last Laugh was required to give Goody Two Shoes was the space Goody Two Shoes needed in the existing conditions to sail promptly in a seamanlike way to the mark (see Case 118). Last Laugh gave Goody Two Shoes that room.

After position 1, Goody Two Shoes luffed gradually through approximately 45 degrees while sailing about three lengths forward. During this maneuver, Goody Two Shoes failed to keep clear of Last Laugh and broke rule 10, On Opposite Tacks.

Mark-room is the room a boat needs to sail to the mark, to round the mark on the required side, and to leave it astern. When Goody Two Shoes gybed just after position 2, she was sailing outside the mark-room to which she was entitled and is not exonerated for her breach of rule 10, On Opposite Tacks.

Both boats broke rule 14(a), Avoiding Contact, because there was contact, and it was 'reasonably possible' for each of them to avoid it. Goody Two Shoes is therefore disqualified under rule 14(a) Avoiding Contact, as well as rule 10, On Opposite Tacks. Goody Two Shoes is not exonerated, because she was sailing outside the room to which she was entitled. However, Last Laugh is exonerated for breaking rule 14(a) Avoiding Contact, because she was the right-of-way boat when the contact occurred, and there was no damage or injury (see rule 43.1(c), Exoneration).

RULES THAT APPLY

Definitions, Mark-Room

Rule 10, On Opposite Tacks

Rule 14(a), Avoiding Contact

Rule 18.2(a)(1), Mark-Room: Giving Mark-Room

Rule 43.1(c), Exoneration

CONCLUSIONS

1. Goody Two Shoes on port tack failed to keep clear of Last Laugh on starboard tack, and broke RRS 10. Goody Two Shoes Broke rule 10.
2. Goody Two Shoes did not avoid contact with Last Laugh even though it was reasonably possible, and broke RRS 14(a).
3. Last Laugh did not avoid contact with Goody Two Shoes even though it was reasonably possible, and broke RRS 14(a).
4. Since Last Laugh was a right-of-way boat and the contact did not cause damage or injury, she is exonerated under RRS 43.1(c) for breaking RRS 14.

DECISION

1. Goody Two Shoes is DSQ



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](#)
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