

The New Racing Rules

The rules that govern boats' actions near marks and obstructions. The Zone around marks has been increased to three boat lengths, new definitions have been added for Mark-Room and Fetching, and there's a brand new rule for passing obstructions. Though these changes don't actually affect the 'game' too much, they make the rules clearer and more logical.

Obligations to Give Mark-room

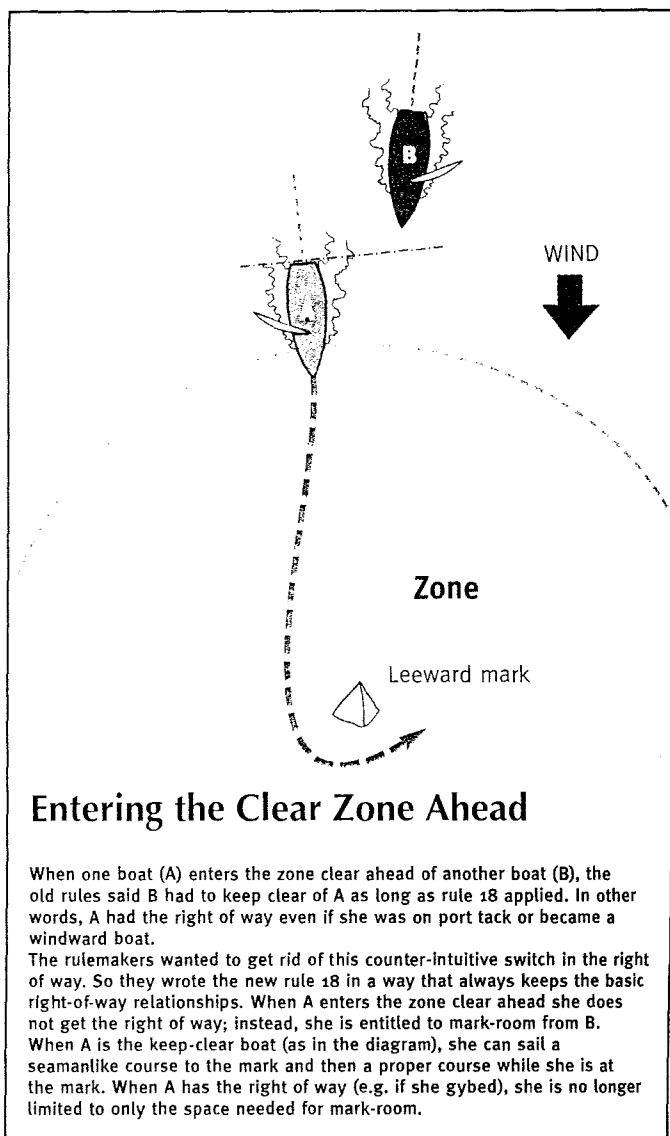
One thing that is very similar about the old and new rule 18 is they both "lock-in" the boats' obligations at the moment the first one reaches the zone. Of course, the "lock-in" moments are different - it was two hull lengths in the old rule and three lengths in the new rule. But the principle, explained in rules 18.2b and 18.2c, is the same.

There are, however, some other differences in the new rule 18:

- * A boat does not reach the zone until some part of her hull is in the zone (see SAILING March 2009 issue "The Zone").
- * When boats are overlapped at the zone, the inside boat is thereafter entitled to 'mark-room.' This is different than the 'room' she got under the old rule 18 (see SAILING March 2009 issue 'Mark-Room').
- * When a boat is clear ahead at the zone, she is thereafter entitled to mark-room from the boat clear astern. This is very different from the old rule, which automatically gave the clear-ahead boat the right of way for the entire mark rounding (see diagram 'Entering the Zone Clear Ahead').

Once rule 18.2b kicks in and determines which boat is entitled to mark-room, the obligation applies until that boat is leaving the mark and no longer needs mark-room. There are only two exceptions to this. According to new 18.2c, rule 18.2b ceases to apply if:

- * Either of the boats passes head to wind. This is a change from the old rule, which turned off only when the boat that was clear ahead passed head to wind.
- * The boat entitled to mark-room goes outside the zone. In the old rules, this did not necessarily turn off the boats' obligations under rule 18 (see diagram 'Going Outside the Zone').



18.2 Giving Mark-Room

(b) if boats are *overlapped* when the first of them reaches the *zone*, the outside boat at that moment shall thereafter give the inside boat *mark-room*. If a boat is *clear ahead* when she reaches the *zone*, the boat clear astern at that moment shall thereafter give her *mark-room*.

(c) When a boat is required to give *mark-room* by rule 18.2(b), she shall continue to do so even if later an *overlap* is broken or a new *overlap* begins. However, if either boat passes head to wind or if the boat entitled to *mark-room* leaves the *zone*, rule 18.2(b) ceases to apply.

OLD 18.2 Giving Room; Keeping Clear

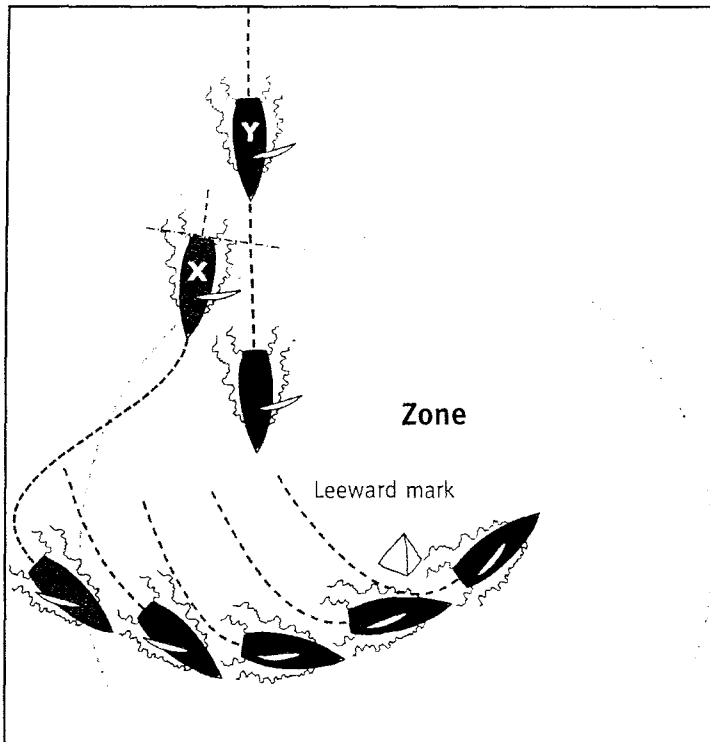
(b) OVERLAPPED AT THE ZONE (OLD)

If boats were overlapped before either of them reached the

two-length zone and the overlap is broken after one of them has reached it, the boat that was on the outside shall continue to give the other boat room. If the outside boat becomes clear astern or overlapped inside the other boat, she is not entitled to room and shall keep clear.

(c) NOT OVERLAPPED AT THE ZONE

If a boat was clear ahead at the time she reached the two-length zone, the boat clear astern shall thereafter keep clear. If the boat clear astern becomes overlapped outside the other boat, she shall also give the inside boat room. If the boat clear astern becomes overlapped inside the other boat, she is not entitled to room. If the boat that was clear ahead passes head to wind, rule 18.2c) no longer applies and remains inapplicable.



Going Outside the Zone

If a boat (X) is clear ahead when she reaches the zone, new rule 18.2b says the boat clear astern (Y) shall "thereafter give her mark-room." This means that as long as rule 18 applies and X is sailing to the mark or is at the mark, she's entitled to mark-room from Y (but if X has right of way she can sail a wider course and Y must keep clear).

Rule 18.2c describes two situations when rule 18.2b might cease to apply before the boats have left the mark. The first, which usually happens at a windward mark, is when either boat passes head to wind.

This is a change from the old rule, which turned off Y's obligation only when X passed head to wind.

The second situation is shown here. Under the old rules, there were times when X could go outside the zone (e.g. when giving room to other boats) and still retain the right of way that she earned from entering the zone clear ahead. But in the new rules, it's clear that if X goes outside the zone, rule 18.2b no longer applies.

Tacking Near a Mark

The old rule 18.3 was written to minimize the confusion that happens when boats approach a windward mark on port tack, and the new rule 18.3 does the same thing a little more effectively and clearly.

Perhaps the biggest change in the new rule is that the zone has been enlarged from two lengths to three! This means a boat is subject to rule 18.3 if any part of her tack occurs less than three lengths from the mark. That will be farther away than most sailors think, so be careful.

Another change is that the words 'on the required side' have been added to 18.3a. This makes it clear that the fetching boat must actually be able to fetch the mark - it is not sufficient to 'pass' the mark on the wrong side.

Third, the words 'in which case rule 15 does not apply to her' have been deleted from old 18.3b. An inside fetching boat is entitled to mark-room and thereby will be exonerated for breaking rule 15 or any of the rules in 18.5b. Finally, the term fetching has been defined (see next page).

18.3 Tacking When Approaching a Mark

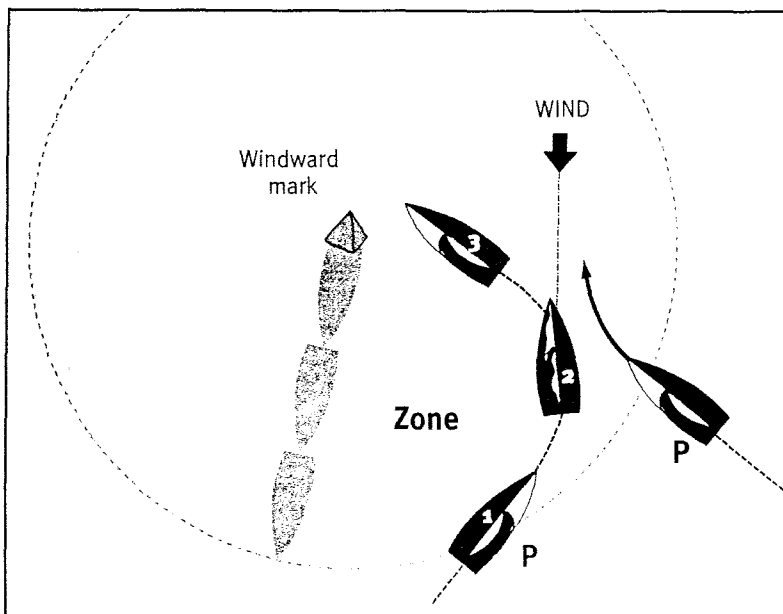
If two boats were approaching a mark on opposite tacks and one of them changes tack, and as a result is subject to rule 13 in the zone when the other is fetching the mark, rule 18.2 does not thereafter apply. The boat that changed tack

- (a) shall not cause the other boat to sail above close-hauled to avoid her or prevent the other boat from passing the mark on the required side, and
- (b) shall give mark-room if the other boat becomes overlapped inside her.

(OLD) 18.3 Tacking at a Mark (OLD)

If two boats were approaching a mark on opposite tacks and one of them completes a tack in the two-length zone when the other is fetching the mark, rule 18.2 does not apply. The boat that tacked

- (a) shall not cause the other boat to sail above close-hauled to avoid her or prevent the other boat from passing the mark, and
- (b) shall give room if the other boat becomes overlapped inside her, in which case rule 15 does not apply.



The new rule 18.3 was written to correct a flaw in the 2005-2008 rules. The old rule 18.3 said that a boat was not subject to the restrictions of that rule unless she "completes a tack inside the two-length zone." Consider the boats in position 2 above. The Red boat is turned just past head to wind but she has not yet completed a tack in the zone, so rule 18.3 does not apply to her. She is now on starboard tack and has an inside overlap on Green. Red is tacking and would normally be subject to rule 13 (Changing tacks), but rule 13 conflicts with rule 18 so 18 takes precedence. Therefore, Green must give Red room.

This was totally contrary to what rule 18.3 was trying to accomplish. So the rulemakers changed the new rule to say that 18.3 applied when a boat "is subject to rule 13 in the zone." This makes Red subject to rule 18.3 as soon as she passes head to wind (since that is when 13 turns on).

FETCHING: To Fetch or not to Fetch

This definition is a new addition to the rulebook. Since the term 'fetching' is used in rule 18.3 (*Tacking when approaching a mark*) and in rule 20.3 (*When not to hail*), the rulemakers thought it would be helpful to define exactly what this term means.

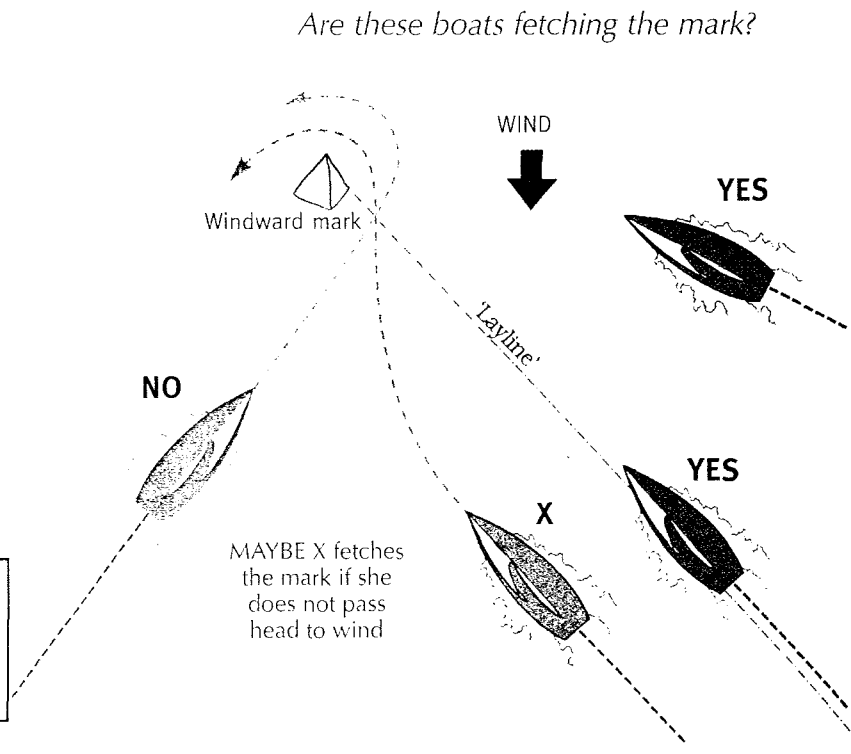
A boat is *fetching* a mark if she can:

- 1) pass to windward of it, and
- 2) leave it on the required side, and
- 3) remain on the same tack.

If a boat has to change tack to pass to windward of the mark or to leave the mark on the required side, she is not *fetching* it. A boat (e.g. X) is *fetching* a mark if she can round it without turning past head to wind.

DEFINITION: Fetching

A boat is *fetching* a mark when she is in a position to pass to windward of it and leave it on the required side without changing tack.



Are these boats fetching the mark?

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No Gybe Required at Gate Marks

The new version of rule 18.4 (Gybing) is a lot like the old. Both rules apply when an inside overlapped right-of-way boat must gybe at a mark to sail her proper course. And both rules say that, until she gybes, this boat cannot sail farther from the mark than she needs to sail that proper course.

But there are two changes in the new rule - one small and one big. The small change is that the rule now applies only at marks and never at obstructions (unless they are also marks). This makes sense because rule 18.4 was hardly ever used at obstructions in the past. It was not necessary for safety and confusing for tactics, so things are simpler without having to worry about it at obstructions.

The big change is that rule 18.4 no longer applies at a gate mark!

The rulemakers turned the rule off there because it is often not clear which mark of the gate a boat intends to round. If a leeward boat is heading toward the middle of the gate, the reasoning goes, it would be unfair to require that boat to gybe and go around a mark that it may not want to round.

So 18.4 is off at all gate marks. This means an inside overlapped right-of-way boat doesn't have to gybe to sail her proper course at the mark (unless she came from astern and rule 17 applies). She can sail wider than her proper course or head up and sail toward the other gate mark! The outside overlapped give-way boat now has to be more careful because she does not know if the boat inside her will gybe to round one mark or head up to round the other.

18.4 Gybing

When an inside overlapped right-of-way boat must gybe at a mark to sail her proper course, until she gybes she shall sail no farther from the mark than needed to sail that course. Rule 18.4 does not apply at a gate mark.

(OLD) 18.4 Gybing

When an inside overlapped right-of-way boat must gybe at a mark or obstruction to sail her proper course, until she gybes she shall sail no farther from the mark or obstruction than needed to sail that course.

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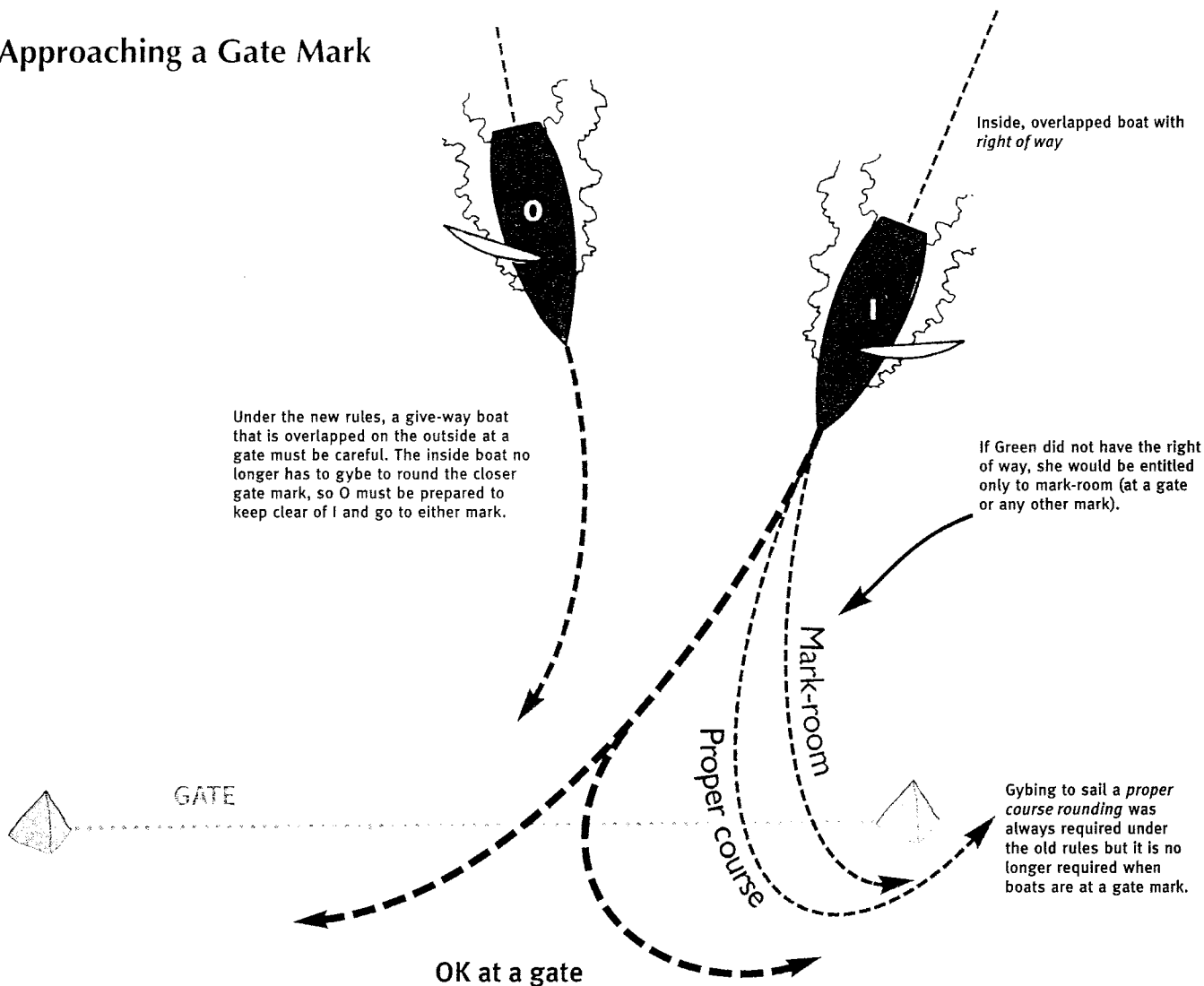
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Approaching a Gate Mark



When boats approach a gate mark, rule 18.4 (Gybing) no longer applies. This means a boat that is overlapped on the inside and has right of way is not required to gybe to sail her proper course around the mark. However, if she got her overlap from clear astern and the boats are on the same tack, rule 17 says she does have to gybe to sail her proper course.

Mark-Room and Exoneration

One complaint about the old version of rule 18 was that it arbitrarily turned rules on or off and switched the right of way. So when the rule writers created the new rule 18, they kept all the right-of-way rules turned on. Now when one boat enters the zone clear ahead of another, for example, rule 18 does not automatically give her the right of way. Instead, it says that she is entitled to mark-room.

But what happens if, in the course of taking *mark-room*, this boat breaks a basic right-of-way rule like port-starboard or windward-leeward? New rule 18.5 says she will be exonerated (i.e. not penalized) if the other boat failed to give her the *mark-room* to which she was entitled. She can be exonerated for breaking rules 10, 11, 12 or 13 at any time while she is entitled to *mark-room*. She can also be exonerated for breaking rules 15 or 16 if the incident happens when she is sailing her proper course while

“rounding” the mark. Note that there is no exoneration provision for a boat that breaks rule 14 (Avoiding Contact) when there is avoidable damage or injury. ↴

18.5 Exoneration

When a boat is taking *mark-room* to which she is entitled, she shall be exonerated

- (a) if, as a result of the other boat failing to give her *mark-room*, she breaks a rule of Section A, or
- (b) if, by rounding the *mark* on her *proper course*, she breaks a rule of Section A or rule 15 or 16.

(OLD) 18.2 (d) Changing Course to Round or Pass (OLD)

When after the starting signal rule 18 applies between two boats and the right-of-way boat is changing course to round or pass a mark, rule 16 does not apply between her and the other boat.