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TEAM RACE COACHING

This booklet is written primarily for those involved in coaching team racing at an introductory and intermediate level. By the nature of the subject it may also be used by team racers themselves. Effective team racing is built on the physical skills of boat handling and boat speed, as well as a ready understanding of the rules and how they may be used to improve a team's overall position. Team race tactics are the tools to achieve winning combinations.

Team Racing is like any other team sport, the achievement of the team is the consequence of the collective actions of the team members. Unlike other team sports where individuals carry out specific roles, team racing requires total flexibility, yet complete confidence and understanding of a team mate's moves and actions in any given situation. Coaching team racing is simply to provide the mechanism for individual sailors to acquire this understanding and to develop the team and individual skills to allow their team to win. The effective team coach is the seventh member of the team.

1. Team Racers and Team Racing

Team racing is the main form of sailing at Schools and Universities, while at Sailing Clubs, team racing is simply part of a wider programme. Team racing develops skills which will help competitive fleet racers as well as providing great fun in itself, indeed there are many sailors who see the winter as conveniently arranged to allow them to get back to team racing. Why...because team races typically last 10-12 minutes with lots of action and half the teams win; and if you made a bad start your team mates may be able to get you back into the action by the first mark. Team Racing in the UK is now 50 years old, and with the advent of Umpiring is gaining rapidly in popularity. Regional, National and International events are held across the year, and most weekends will see at least two or three events.

2. Getting Started

Most Clubs have the basic resources to start the ball rolling. Four Toppers and a motorboat. Add five small marks, a whistle and a sailor/coach who has read this booklet and away you go.

Two Boat Team Racing is where it all starts. Apart from the racing rules which are covered later, there is only one strategy to remember. "Last Boat loses" (ie if your team has a boat in last place you lose.)

2.1. The Course

All team race courses are remarkably short, approx 10-12 minutes. The key to a good course is to make the windward and leeward legs as much as three times the length of the reaches or better the reaches should be no more than one minute long. Although the description of the typical training course is a "square"... it really is a "rectangle". Starting lines are always very short, but you might start with a longer line (say 8-10 boatlengths) with novices. The line should be as square to the wind as possible. Most boats will start on starboard so a port bias will make it difficult. If you can make the Windward Mark a different colour to the rest that will help.

2.1.1. Course Direction:

The norm is to leave the windward mark to starboard. This passes the advantage of leading into the mark to the boat astern and so makes the game more fun.

2.2. Starting Signals

The standard three starting battens with a whistle is all that is needed.

There are various systems but the simplest is:

With ten seconds to go to the three minutes give a series of 4 or 5 very short blasts, then make certain there is a gap of at least 5 seconds and then:

3 minutes to go: hold up three battens and start to blow the whistle for one long blast.

2 minutes to go: hold up two battens and start to blow the whistle for one long blast.

1 minutes to go: hold up one batten and start to blow the whistle for one long blast.

Start: Lower the battens and start to blow the whistle for one long blast.

OCS(Premature Starter) One more long blast and shout the sail number.

General recall- lots of shouts and whistles.

Timing: Use just one watch (yours) and blow the whistle when the second hand comes to 12 or 00 on a digital. The sailors will only have to set their watches once if you do this. Make certain the battens are held up between the sound signals as no one ever remembers how long to go (including the coach if someone asks that question: "Where is the windward mark?") Never reset your watch onto some fancy mode as the timing will change and the sailors will grumble.

2.3. Team Identification

This can be difficult especially if the coach is new to the group. One excellent idea is to wrap coloured bands around the mast below the gooseneck. This is great on Toppers, where anything attached to the end of the boom may foul the mainsheet, in centersheeted boats ribbons attached to the end of the boom also works well. If you have a competition then it is very important to have the teams identified correctly as they cross the line, so bow markers are best here, although the ribbon around the mast of the Topper will be fine.

2.4. Reefing

While there are normally lots of complaints from the hard man in the group, reefing is standard practice at major team racing events, The Wilson trophy organisers keep a second set of cut down sails for the purpose. Reefed sails slow the game down, reduce the possibility of damage and means that the racing goes ahead in a meaningful way, rather than having to wait for people and boats to be rescued.

3. Umpiring

Umpiring is now a standard feature at all Team Racing Events. The benefits of the system are significant, the most important being that protests no longer come ashore, but rather are resolved on the water by requesting the Umpire's decision. The process is also very simple. If a boat wishes to protest another about an alleged infringement they hail protest and wave a red flag. If the protested boat does not acknowledge the infringement and do a 360 degree turn, then the protesting boat may ask the Umpire for a decision by hailing "Umpire Decision (Please)" and waving a Yellow flag.

The Umpire has two basic answers. If he/she is certain that a boat has infringed, they signal this with a red flag, whistle and point the red flag at the infringing boat (they often call the number as well). If they are unclear or if they consider there was no infringement they will display a green flag. Just occasionally if an incident has really effected a teams' result, the umpire may give additional turns as a form of redress, but if these turns do not correct the situation they may display a Black Flag, which means the incident may be brought ashore. The Black Flag is also used for misconduct...but in all situations the competitors should continue to race.

Appendix D the Team Racing Appendix gives full details of the Umpiring System.

4. Planning a Programme

Whether one is planning a one-day introduction or a full programme for a club or school team there are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration:

4.1. The Purpose

At a one-day introduction: The coach's main purpose is to introduce newcomers to this branch of sailing. They will only carry on if they have had fun and think that what they learnt was worthwhile and especially if they think it will help their other sailing. The measure of success of such a course is a demand for more team racing.

On Going training: Most coaches work in environment where team race training is a weekly or twice weekly part of a school or university programme. The purpose of these sessions is to improve standards, but it is important that the sailors finish each day with a feeling of achievement. Identifying weaknesses at one session and then developing and practising ways of overcoming these problems will make the sessions meaningful. Coaches must listen to the sailors to ensure they are providing the training that is really needed.

4.2. The Sailors

At a one day introduction: Assume the worse until you are proved otherwise. If you are talking about rules, rest assured that the level of knowledge is minimal. Apologise in advance for teaching grannies to suck eggs... but the apology will be mostly good manners. Boat handling will provide much opportunity for improvement, but be warned you are there to coach team racing not basic skills. Whatever you do you need to ensure that the sailors are not so intimidated by the process that they are put off. If you have some star team racers in the group, then use them to help the others, maybe even by crewing, but avoid situations where they simply take the opportunity to score cheap points. When on the water many will not understand technical jargon so you will have to give simple clear instructions.

Two useful hand signals are

- Patting the top of one's head = Come to me or Follow me
- Moving one's hands back and forth across each other = Change helms.

On Going training: The Coach normally knows the sailors in such training, and should try to pair people to achieve greatest overall progress. Some youngsters are very keen to sail with “my friend”, this is OK as long as it is consistent with making progress. A pre prepared list of who is sailing with who in which boat often stops the debates on the shore, and prevents the problem of the last to be picked syndrome. When sailing in doublehanders it is best to have mixed sex boats and to have less experienced with more experienced.

Be aware of conflict between individuals and the tendency of some of the better to “rubbish” the efforts of the less experienced.

4.3. The Weather

General: Much team racing takes place during the winter months so it can be cold wet and miserable. Ensure all the sailors are as warmly dressed as possible, you might even take the odd spare balaclava to lend. (Make sure it is returned). Warming up exercises on the shore sound a good idea, but apart from some stretching exercises you will not get a very favourable response. However, once the group are on the water rapid tacking and gybing on the whistle quickly gets the blood circulating. After a few minutes it is only the Coach who is likely to get Hypothermia.

Hypothermia is always a risk especially after capsizes. Many sailors just have wetsuits and those with drysuits frequently have leaks. If there is a capsize, check that all is well and that people are not getting cold.

At a one-day introduction: Always be cautious. If you think that it might be too windy for some then order reefs. If it is cold check who has wetsuits and who has drysuits. Wear a hat if its cold, and try to convince others to do the same.

The weather will have a major impact on the length of your sessions. If you are able to have long periods on the water take some water with you to give the sailors or suggest they take some in their boats. If sunny remind the sailors about hats, sunglasses and sun bloc. In windy conditions pure exhaustion will set in quickly so the sessions will need to be shorter. Whatever you do try to avoid boats sailing about waiting for something to happen, or their turn.

On Going training: Much of the above applies, but with a group the coach regularly works with the unknowns are less. Planning who sails with whom can be adjusted to ensure all the boats have a competent person should the wind strength be too great. Always be prepared to throw the day's plan out the window if the conditions make things look untenable.

4.4. The Action Plan

Each session must have a clear set of aims. Before the group goes afloat the coach must:

- Identify the Sailing Area.
- Explain what course will be used.
- Explain the Nature of the exercises to be undertaken.
- Ensure everyone understands (including any coaching assistants)

4.5. Approach to Training

This section mainly addresses the approach individuals take to team practices. Team race training can be very taxing and pressured. It is important that all involved adopt an approach which makes the practice environment as stress free as possible. People learn and perform at far higher levels if they are not placed under unnecessary stress. Although team events are often highly charged the team needs to develop a mechanism to handle this. The right attitude to team practices leaves everyone feeling the practice was worthwhile and enjoyable. Some of the things that need to be done to ensure this are:

- Before going afloat agree the aims and stick to them.
- At starts ensure that premature starters go back, or if the starts are not run by a “race officer”, then if the sailor knows he/she is over they must return.
- When there is an obvious infringement, do your turns, including hitting marks.
- When there is a dispute, agree to settle it ashore.

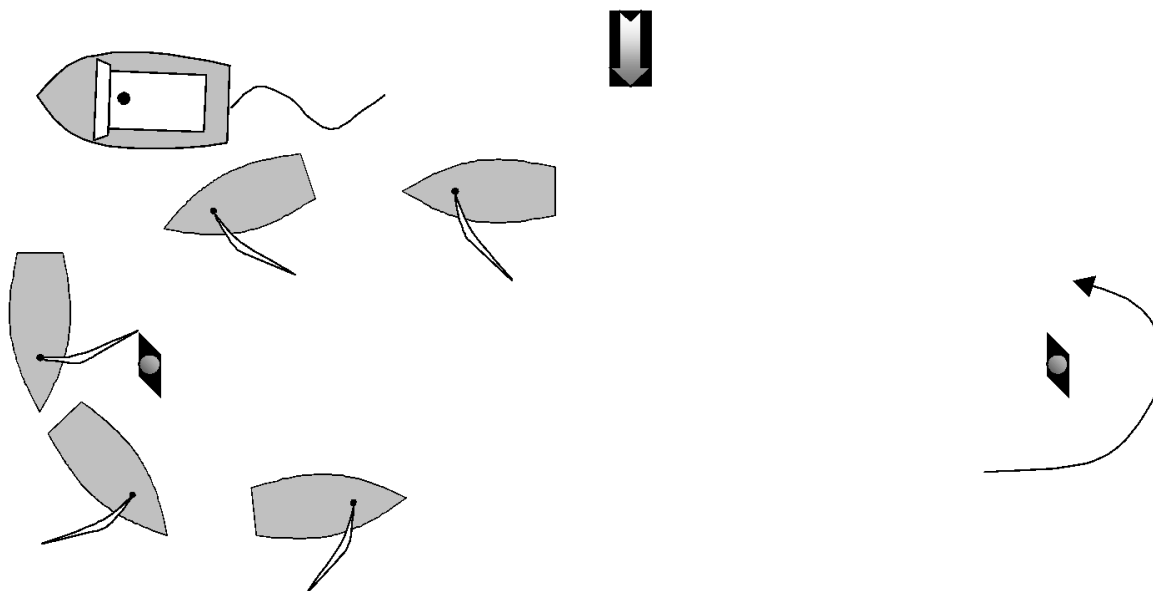
5. Sailing Skills

Team racing relies heavily on boat handling and boat speed skills not normally practised in fleet racing. These include, slowing on all points of sailing, slowing others, stopping at marks, multiple tacks and gybes and close quarters manoeuvring. Coaching the basic skills of stopping and slowing are straightforward. But it is providing the opportunities to practice and perfect them that are important.

5.1. Group work:

Follow the leader, especially downwind provides immediate opportunities to master the basics. Using another boat to be the leader the coach boat can follow alongside providing advice and suggestions. The role of the crew is often overlooked especially if the crew is less experienced than the helm. Get the crew to take as active a part in slowing down and speeding up as the helm. For example the crew can more readily centre the boom, and in some boats standing up and pushing down on the boom will slow the boat further.

5.1.1. Sailing a Lozenge

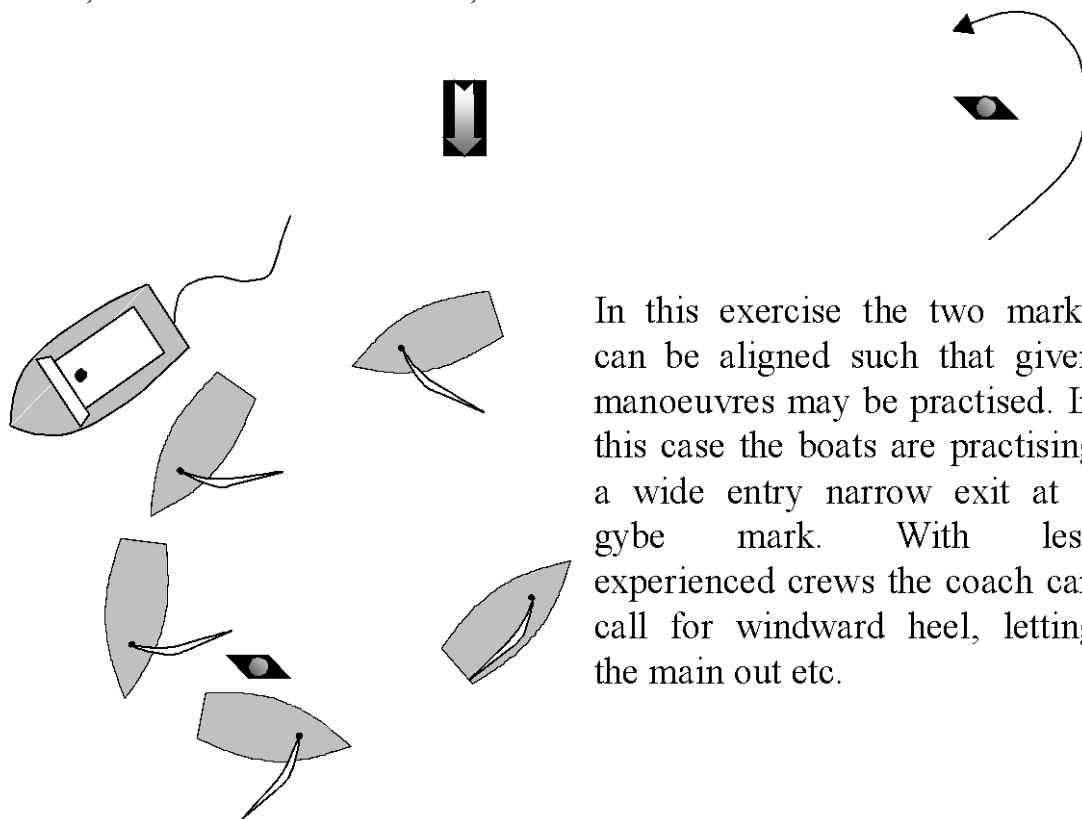


This exercise can be used with a number of boats. The direction around the marks is optional, but figure of eights need to be avoided with novices.

After a period, call “Now Racing” which means that instead of a follow the leader exercise it becomes a race, with all racing rules applying. Generally it is not a good idea to get the boats to change direction as someone always gets the wrong idea.

If when laying the course marks you lay the start marks first then the team can be sailing between these two marks purposefully while the rest of the course is laid.

A variation on the theme is circling the coach boat. (Keep your head down). With a small number of boats, this can be turned into a race, but !!.



In this exercise the two marks can be aligned such that given manoeuvres may be practised. In this case the boats are practising a wide entry narrow exit at a gybe mark. With less experienced crews the coach can call for windward heel, letting the main out etc.

5.1.2. Pairs work:

Most manoeuvres involve just two boats, so this is an excellent way to improve skills.

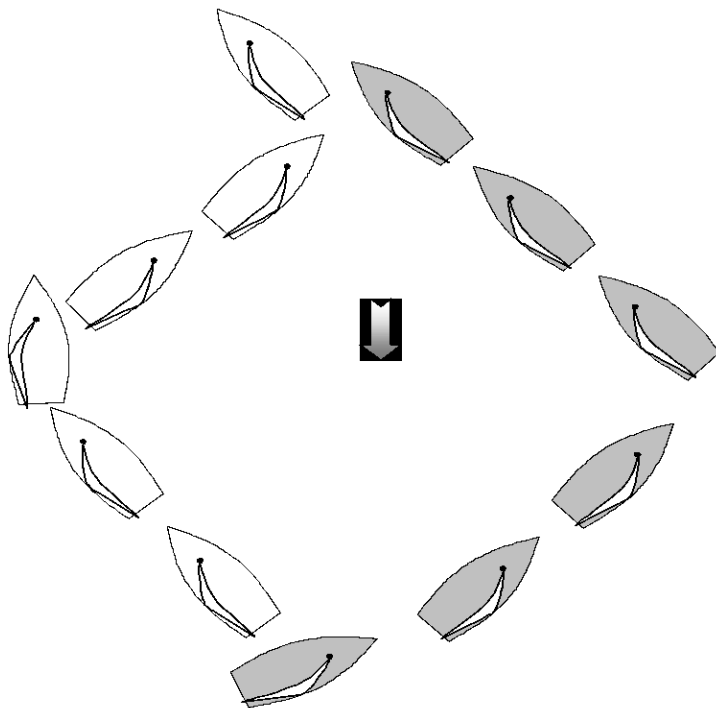
5.1.2.1. Exercise 1-One on One racing.

Purpose of the exercise, to develop slowing techniques, gybing and tacking out, tacking duel techniques.

The objective of this exercise is for the boat that is ahead to slow the boat astern (behind) or when on a beat to prevent the other boat from tacking. The objective of the astern boat is to get through into the lead. Once in the lead the roles reverse. The boats should never get more than a boat length apart. To start simply sail off on the same tack about one length apart. Sail around a small course.

Exercise 2 -“Bunnies”

Purpose: To develop opposite tack skills- tacking for the lee bow, and gybing astern.



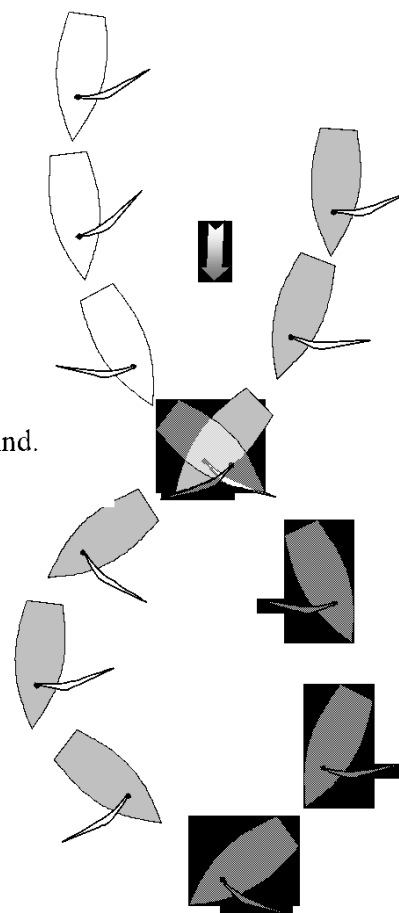
Start on opposite tacks with the grey boat ducking the white boat. Both boats sail on for 5 or 6 lengths then tack together. White now tacks for the lee bow position. Hold the position then Grey tacks off... tack back and Grey goes for the lee bow. The purpose is to develop the team skills, so the boat being tacked on will have to act helpfully by adjusting speed etc to ensure the exercise works.

See facing page for offwind exercise.

Miscellaneous Drills:

1. Rudderless sailing: For most people their experience of this is very rapid 720 degree turns. In fact they very rarely do them as quickly thereafter. Rudderless sailing develops a high degree of crew co-ordination, and an understanding of the balance of the boats.
2. Getting out of irons and time distance work.
 1. Getting out of irons needs forceful tiller movements and for the crew to really push out the jib. Whatever your favourite solution- practice it.
 2. Time distance work. One exercise is to use a course mark as a target and to sail upwind to the mark, but to judge the distance so that the last 10 seconds are sailed at full speed. The crew counts down the time, and with luck and good judgement the boat hits the mark just when the crew says “zero”.

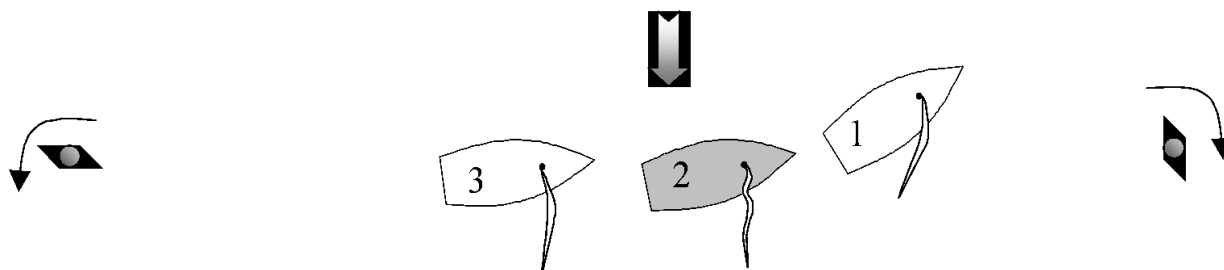
The same thing can work downwind.



Exercise 3- “Piggy in the Middle”

Purpose 1. For “Piggy” to develop the skills of maintaining a position relative to other boats.
Purpose 2. For the other two boats to execute a Passback to get “piggy” to the back.

The exercise can be run between any two marks or on a simple course. Here Boat 2 with no “room” at the mark must avoid an outside overlap on Boat 1 as Boat 1 could then “luff” her. If Boat 3 ducks to go below, Boat 2 must keep ahead of Boat 3 etc. (See Callbook for Rules)



5.1.3. Acceleration Exercises.

Acceleration and stopping are key skills in team racing, so much so that specific training to develop these skills is essential.

In order for these exercises to work the helm and crew need practice in sheeting in.

5.1.3.1. Sheeting In

With the boats on a beam reach the first whistle means “Ease sheets completely”

Then once the sails are both fully out...the second whistle means “sheet in as quickly as possible”.

It is much easier to pull in the jib sheet, but the aim is to pull the sheets in at the same rate so that the slot is not blocked.

5.1.3.2. Stop and Start

The need to go from full speed to stopped and to start again is a key skill in team racing. Get the boats to sail close hauled then:

Then the first whistle means: Stop- crew leap up and back the main, helm ease sheet. As soon as the boat has stopped, helm and crew rest easy in the boat.

Then give a series of five short blasts one second apart then a long blast. The long blast is the start.

Essential tips: At the beginning of the short blasts heel the boat hard to leeward and start to sheet in, then as the short blasts end the boat should be coming upright with the mainsail being sheeted fully home. This should be a single action with both helm and crew moving sharply across the boat to flatten it. The Kicker needs to be just on to gain maximum effect.

6. Rules knowledge

An understanding of the rules comes from two sources.

Study of the Rule Book and the Callbook.

Analysis of incidents on the water.

With few exceptions team racers use the same rules as the rest of the sailing world. But it is the fact that winning often involves slowing an opponent, or manoeuvring against an opponent to the advantage of a team mate that the rules develop a difference in application. There can be no substitute for learning the rules in detail and spending time going through the Callbook with the rule book at one's side.

6.1. Introduction to the Rules

Team Racers are primarily interested in Part 2- When Boats Meet and Appendix D

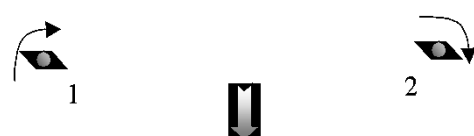
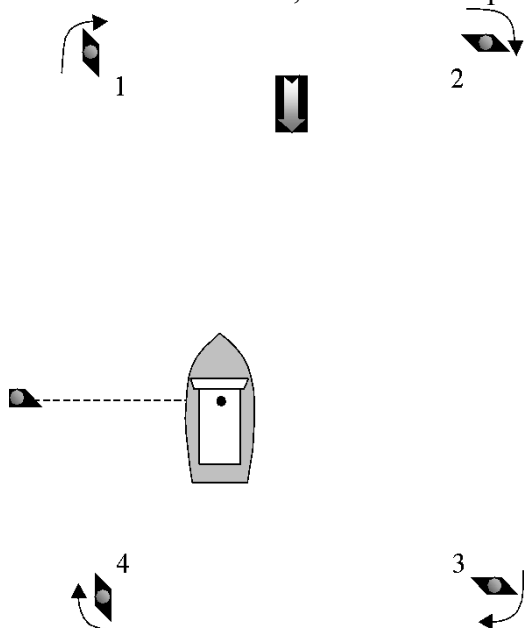
The current rules are written with a simple logic:

When two boats meet the rules state which of the two boats must **KEEP CLEAR** of the other. The other boat is the **RIGHT OF WAY BOAT**.

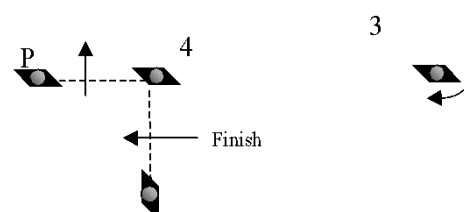
A **RIGHT OF WAY BOAT** has several restrictions placed upon it. The main one being that if she changes course she must give the other boat room to keep clear.

6.2. The Rules around the course.

Team racing takes place on small courses, with tight starting lines, often starboard hand windward marks, beam reaches and a deep reach or a run. The finish is normally at the end of a beat. The course illustrated is typically used for training and can be used for events, although in the UK the "S" course is often used, as it allows separate start and finish.



One of the most practical courses is a simple square. The Coach boat starts the races between Mark 4 and the pin (P). Normally stationed near mark 4. The finish is on a reach below mark 4, or could be at the windward mark. Using marks rather than the coach boat for the line allows maximum flexibility.

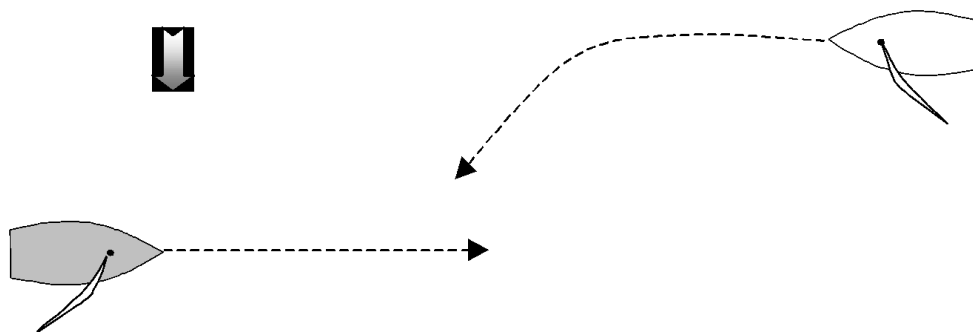


6.2.1. Before the start.

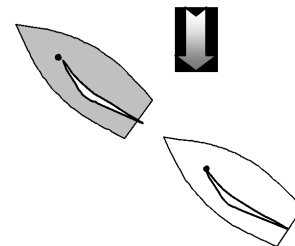
In all racing the time before the start is used to determine the line bias, and then develop a plan for the start. In team racing the same applies, but a new factor arises... you also want to sail in such a way that you mess up your opponent's start.

All the normal rules apply before the start, but there is no proper course until the start signal has sounded, so...

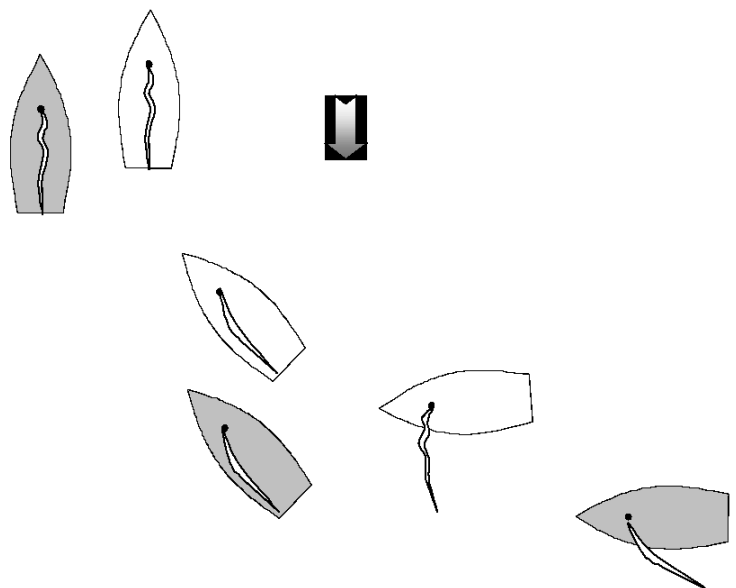
The Grey boat on port tack needs to be aware that her opponent on starboard may change course towards her at any time, and this is legal as long as the port tacker is given room to keep clear.



The boat clear astern may hail "Do not tack in my water" or similar, so beware that if you tack you become give way boat and must keep clear of the boat astern.



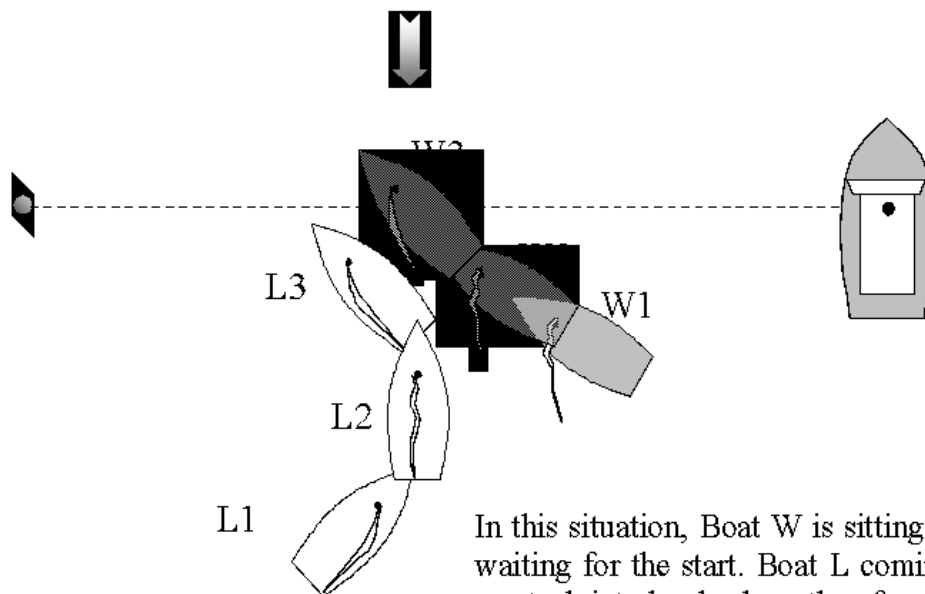
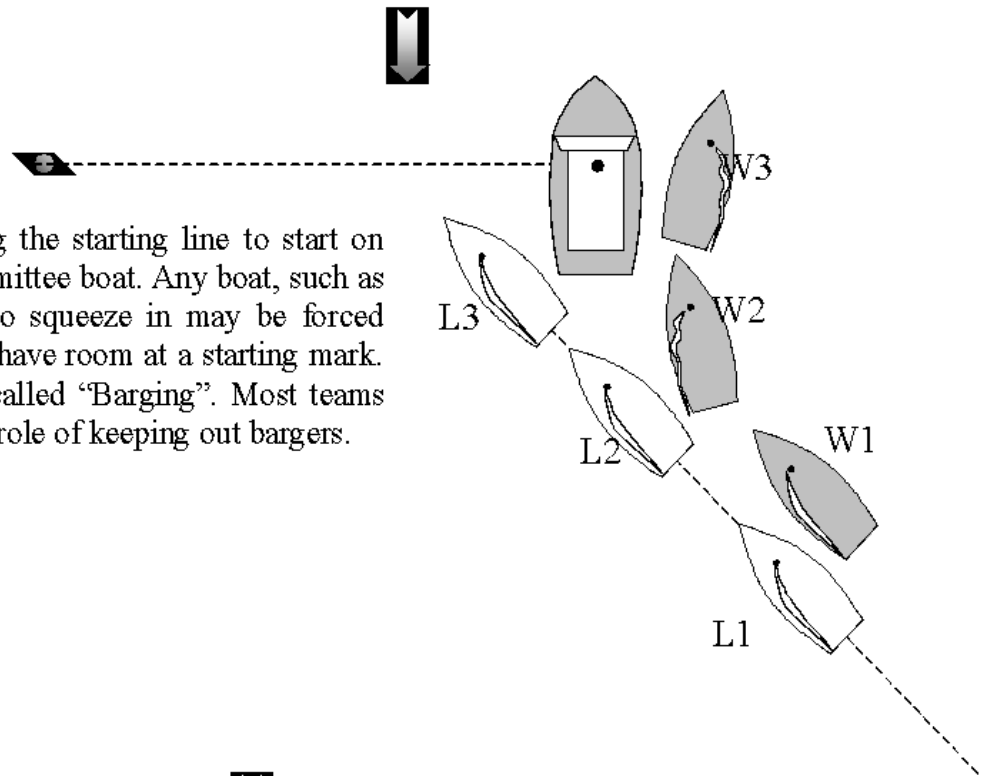
Although the Grey boat has established her overlap from astern, because there is no proper course she is able to luff to head to wind as long as when changing course the windward boat is given room to keep clear.



6.2.2. At the Start:

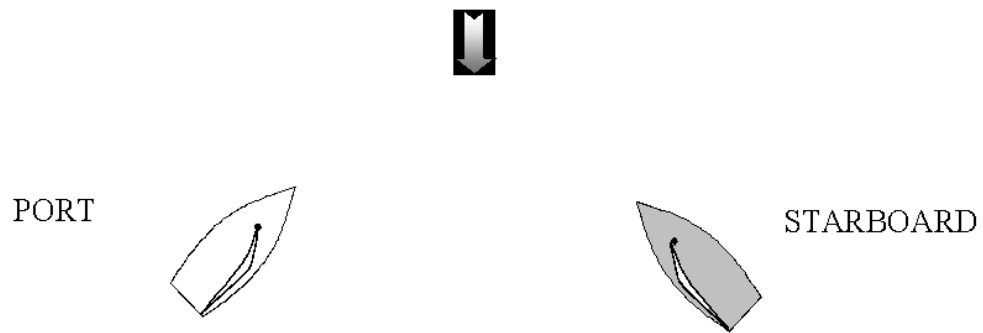
As boats approach the line to start there are two major issues.

Boat L is approaching the starting line to start on the layline to the committee boat. Any boat, such as Boat W which tries to squeeze in may be forced out. Boat W does not have room at a starting mark. This squeezing in is called “Barging”. Most teams assign one boat to the role of keeping out bargers.

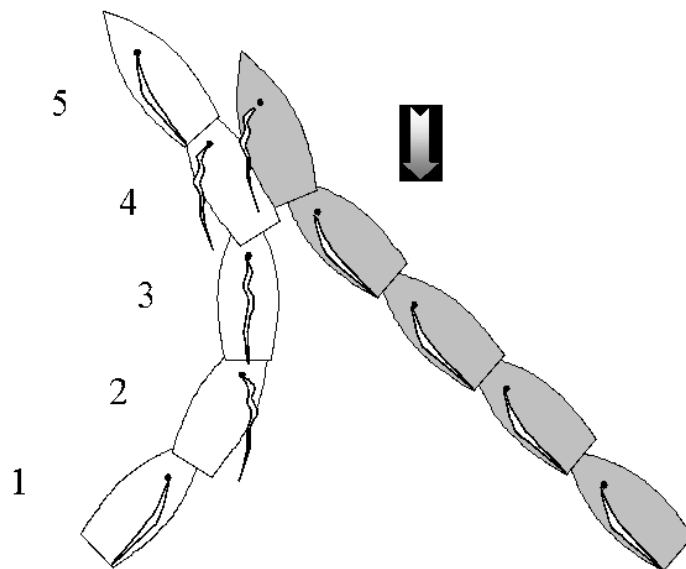


In this situation, Boat W is sitting with her sails out waiting for the start. Boat L coming in on port tack can tack into her lee bow then force her over the line. Boat L could also have come in from astern and done the same thing. The only limitation on Boat L is that she must give Boat W room to keep clear.

6.2.3. On the Beat.



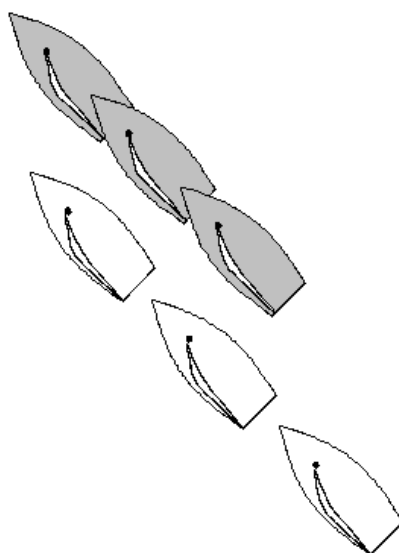
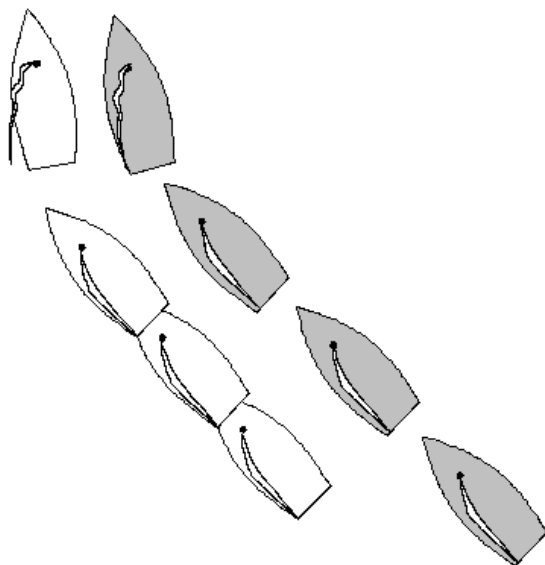
On a beat to windward the Port Tack boat must keep clear of the Starboard Tack Boat. The Starboard Tack Boat is allowed to alter course towards the Port tacker as long as the Port Tack Boat does not immediately have to change course to keep clear.



In the above sequence the Port Tack Boat tries to tack in front of the Starboard Tack Boat. As the Starboard Tack boat has had to change course to avoid a collision before the tack was complete, the Port Tack Boat has broken rule 13. Note that the tack is not complete until the boat is on a close hauled course and also the shaded boat would not have to start to keep clear until after the tack was complete. This is an example of “tacking in water”.

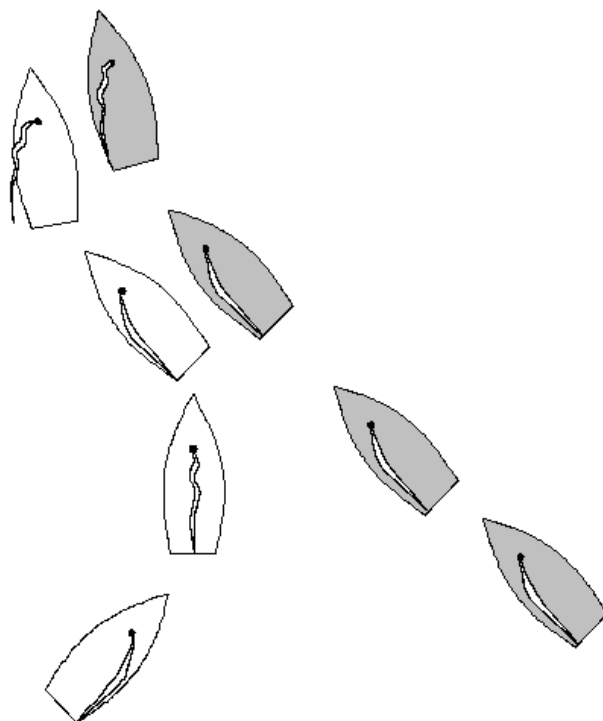
...On the Beat

White has established a leeward overlap from astern, and may not sail above her proper course, unless she tacks and clears the windward boat.



In this case as the Grey boat has established her windward overlap from astern, the white boat may “luff” as long as she gives the windward boat room to keep clear.

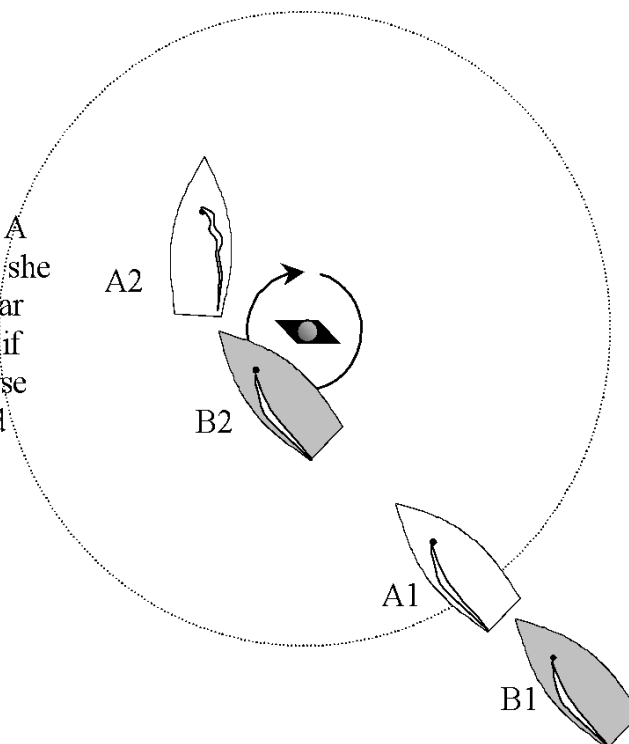
In the final case when the White boat completes her tack she is overlapped with the windward boat and acquires “luffing rights”.



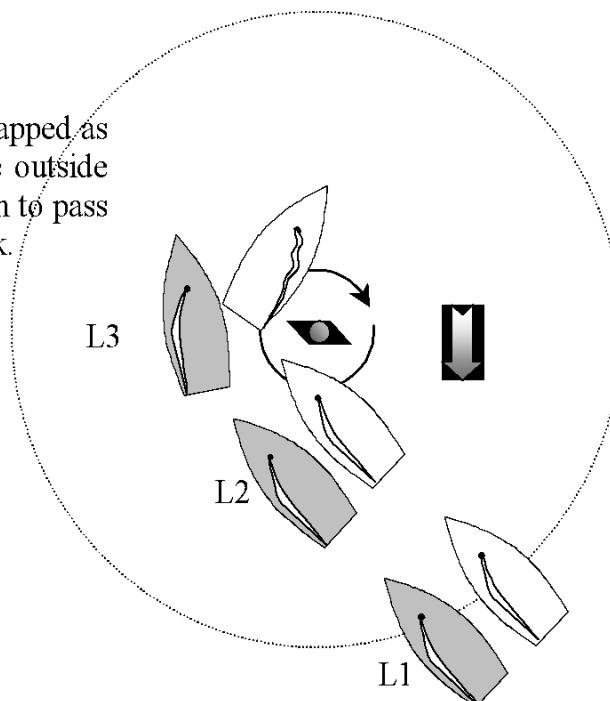
6.2.4. The Windward Mark

In most team races this is left to Starboard

In position 1 Boat A is clear ahead, and Boat B (behind) must keep clear. But if Boat A passes through head to wind she is tacking and must keep clear of the boat astern. Note that if the boat astern changes course she must give the boat ahead room to keep clear.

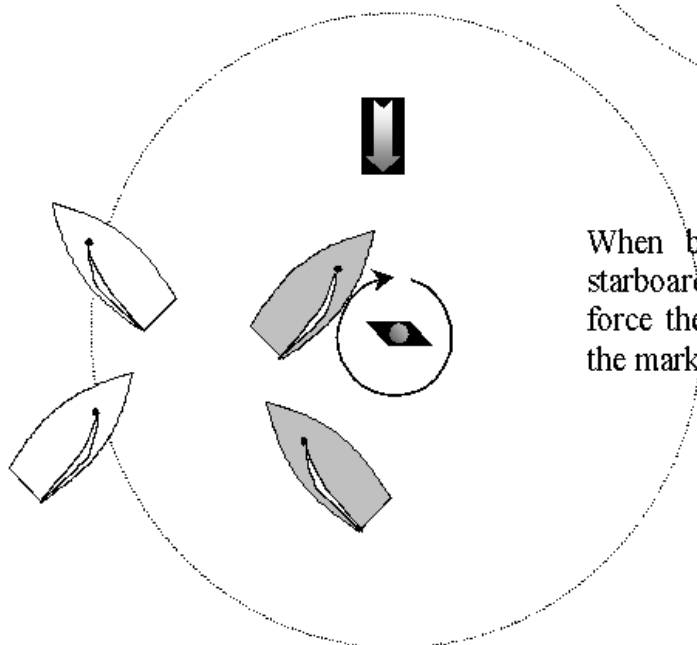
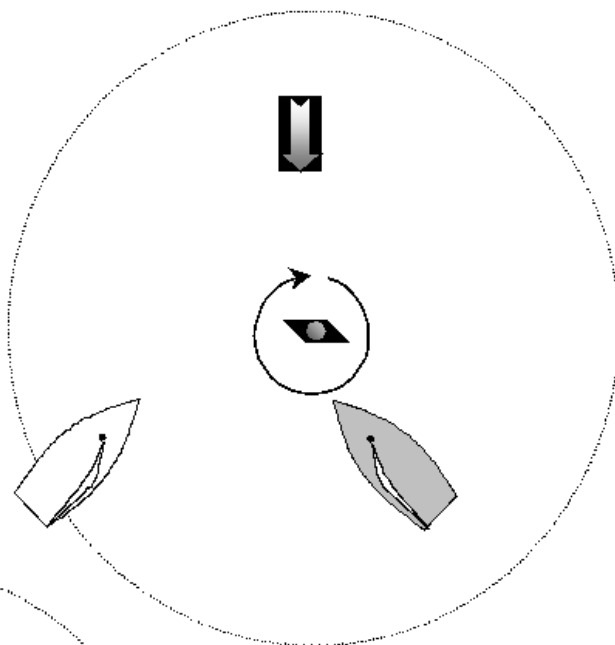


In this case the two boats are overlapped as they enter the two boat zone. The outside boat must give the inside boat room to pass the mark, this includes room to tack.



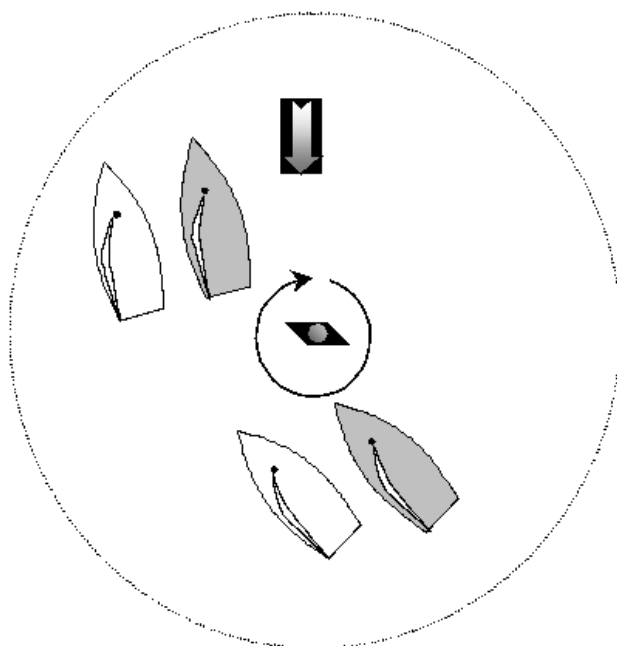
...The Windward Mark

When boats are on opposite tacks at a windward mark, take away the mark to see which rules apply. In this case port must keep clear of starboard, but in addition if the starboard boat tacks, she must keep clear of the port tack boat.

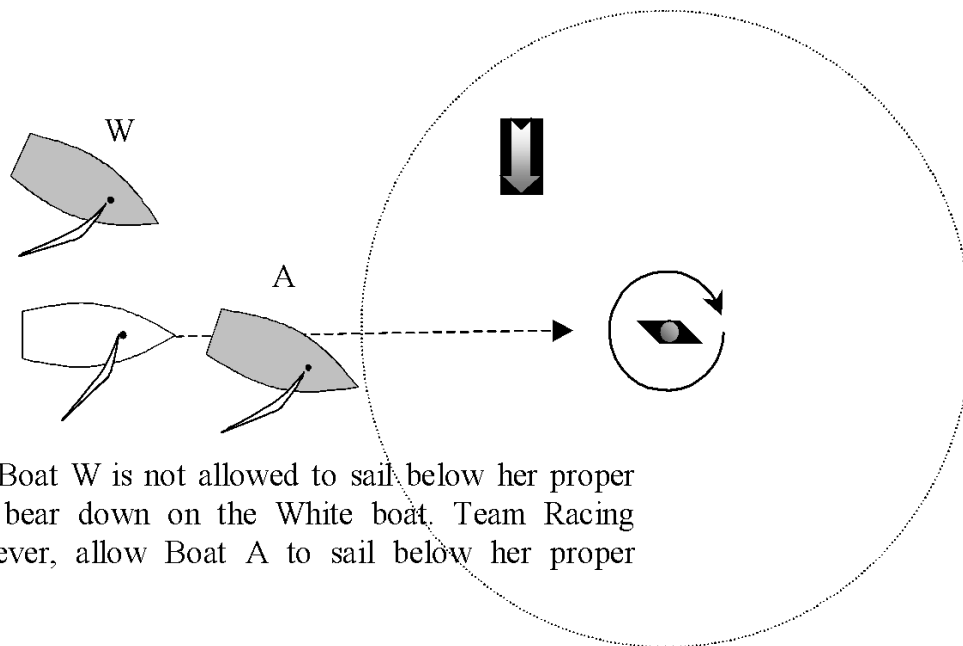


When boats are on opposite tacks, the starboard tack boat may call "Starboard" to force the port tack boat to tack away from the mark, and then tack around the mark.

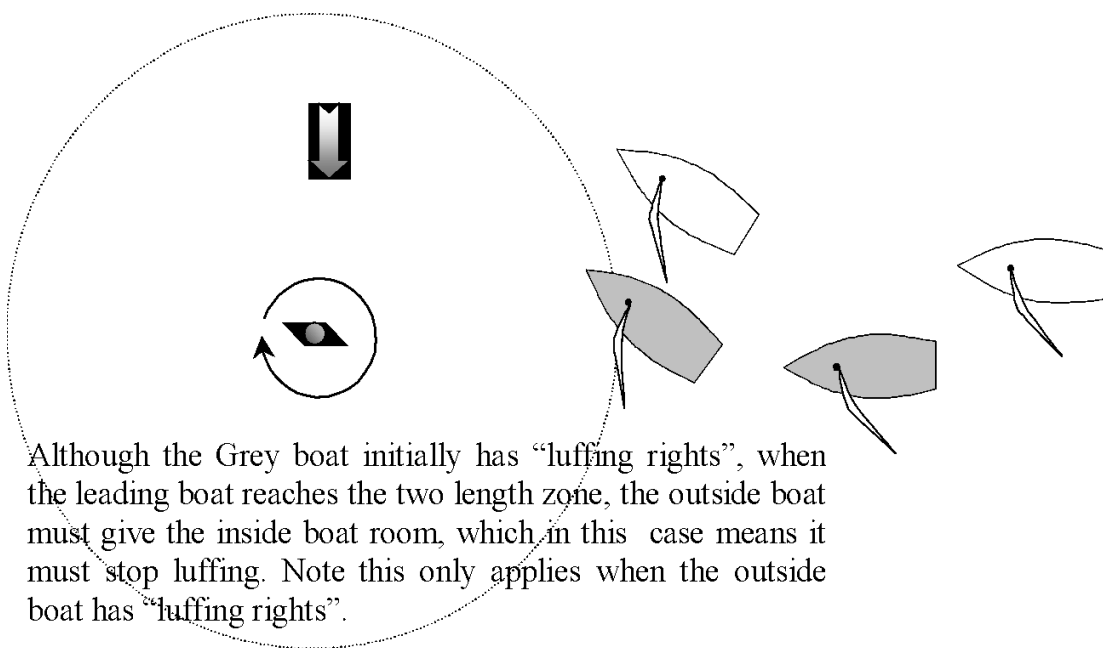
When boats are on the same tack the inside boat may sail the outside boat past the mark. The outside boat is allowed to point up to head to wind, as that is her "proper course", but she may not tack.



6.2.5. The Reach



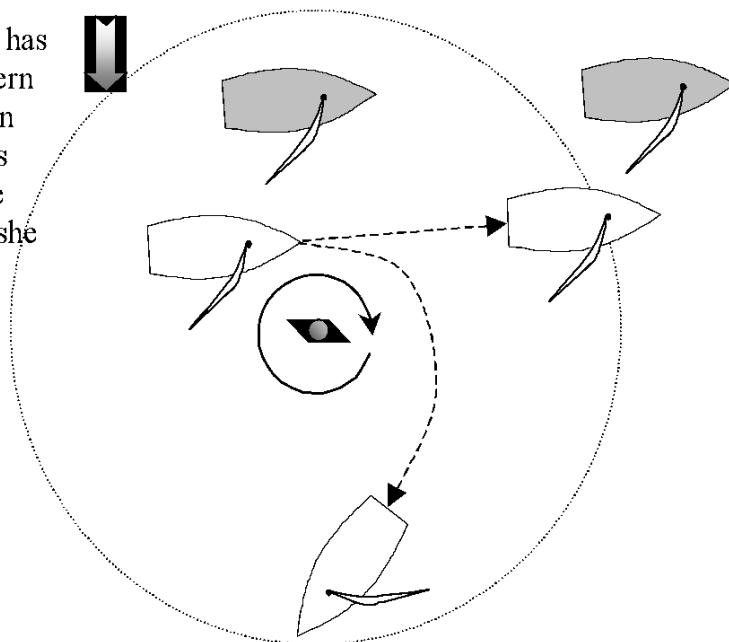
On a reach Boat W is not allowed to sail below her proper course and bear down on the White boat. Team Racing Rules, however, allow Boat A to sail below her proper course.



Although the Grey boat initially has “luffing rights”, when the leading boat reaches the two length zone, the outside boat must give the inside boat room, which in this case means it must stop luffing. Note this only applies when the outside boat has “luffing rights”.

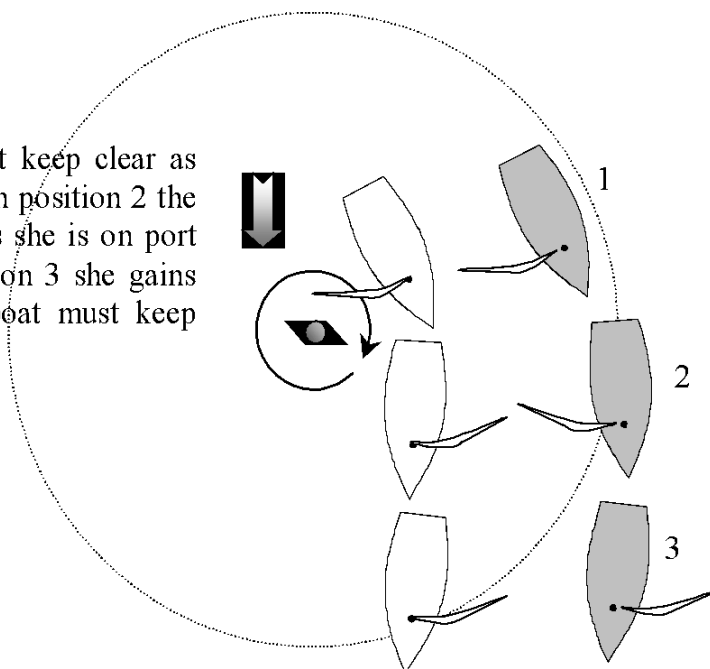
6.2.6. The Gybe Mark

At an offwind (gybe) mark a boat that has established an inside overlap from astern must sail no further from the mark than needed to sail her proper course, if this means gybing she must gybe. If on the other hand a boat has “luffing rights” she may sail on.

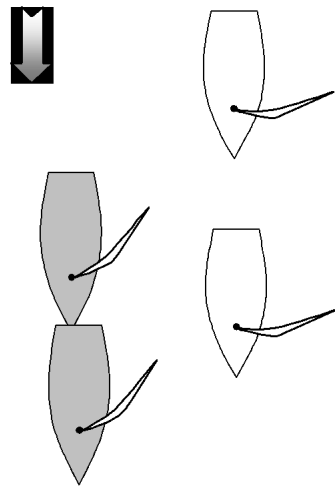


6.2.7. The Run

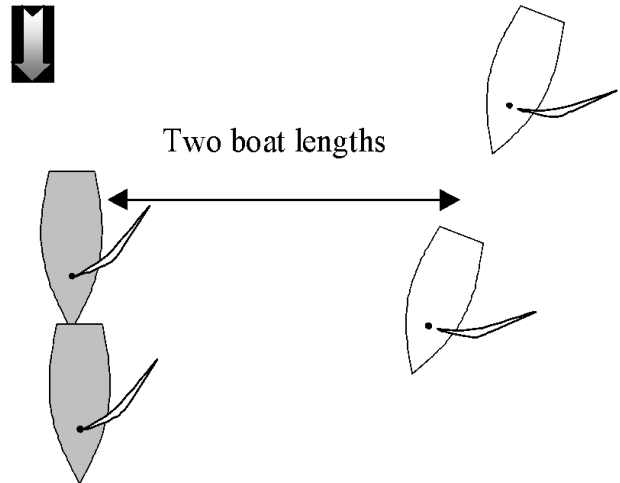
At position 1 the Grey boat must keep clear as the White boat rounds the mark. In position 2 the Grey boat must still keep clear as she is on port tack, but after she gybes at position 3 she gains “luffing rights” and the White boat must keep clear.



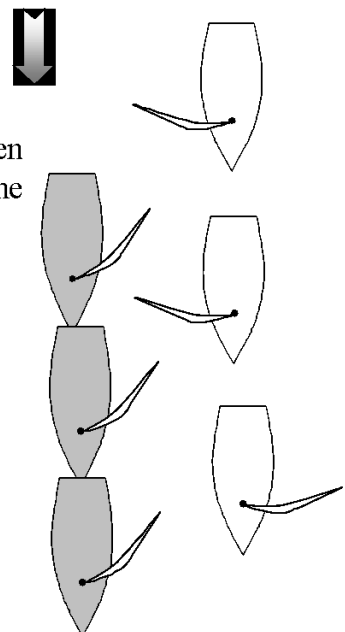
Both boats are on the same tack, so if White establishes an overlap from astern she may not sail above her proper course.



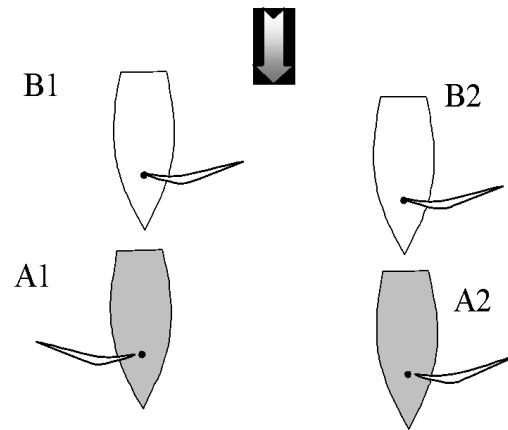
If White establishes her overlap from outside two boat lengths, she gains “luffing rights”.



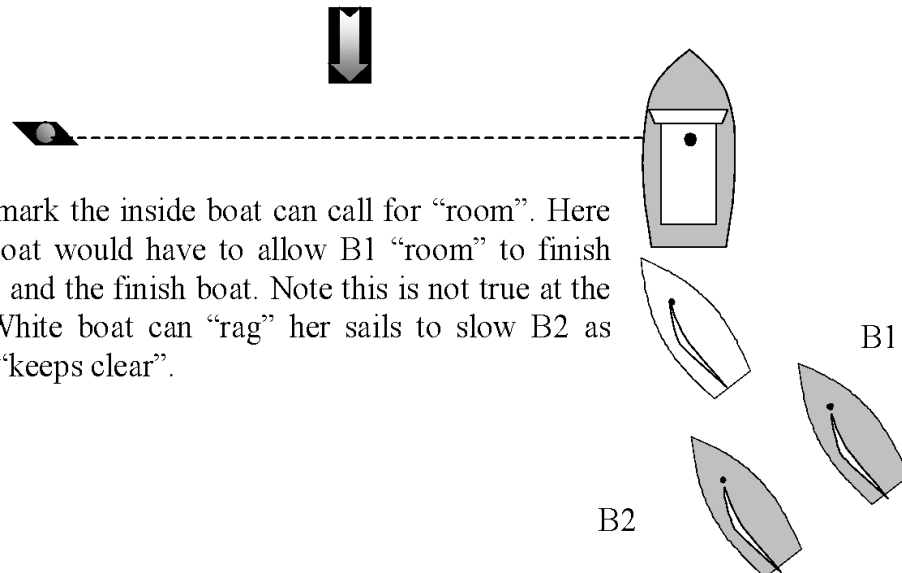
If White comes in from astern and then gybes, such that when she has completed her gybe she is on the same tack as the windward boat she gains “luffing rights”



In this diagram both pairs of boats are running. Boat A1 is on Port tack so must keep clear of Boat B1 which is on starboard tack. In the second pair Boat B2 is on the same tack and clear astern so must keep clear of Boat A2.



6.2.8. The Finishing Line



At a finish mark the inside boat can call for “room”. Here the White boat would have to allow B1 “room” to finish between her and the finish boat. Note this is not true at the start. The White boat can “rag” her sails to slow B2 as long as she “keeps clear”.

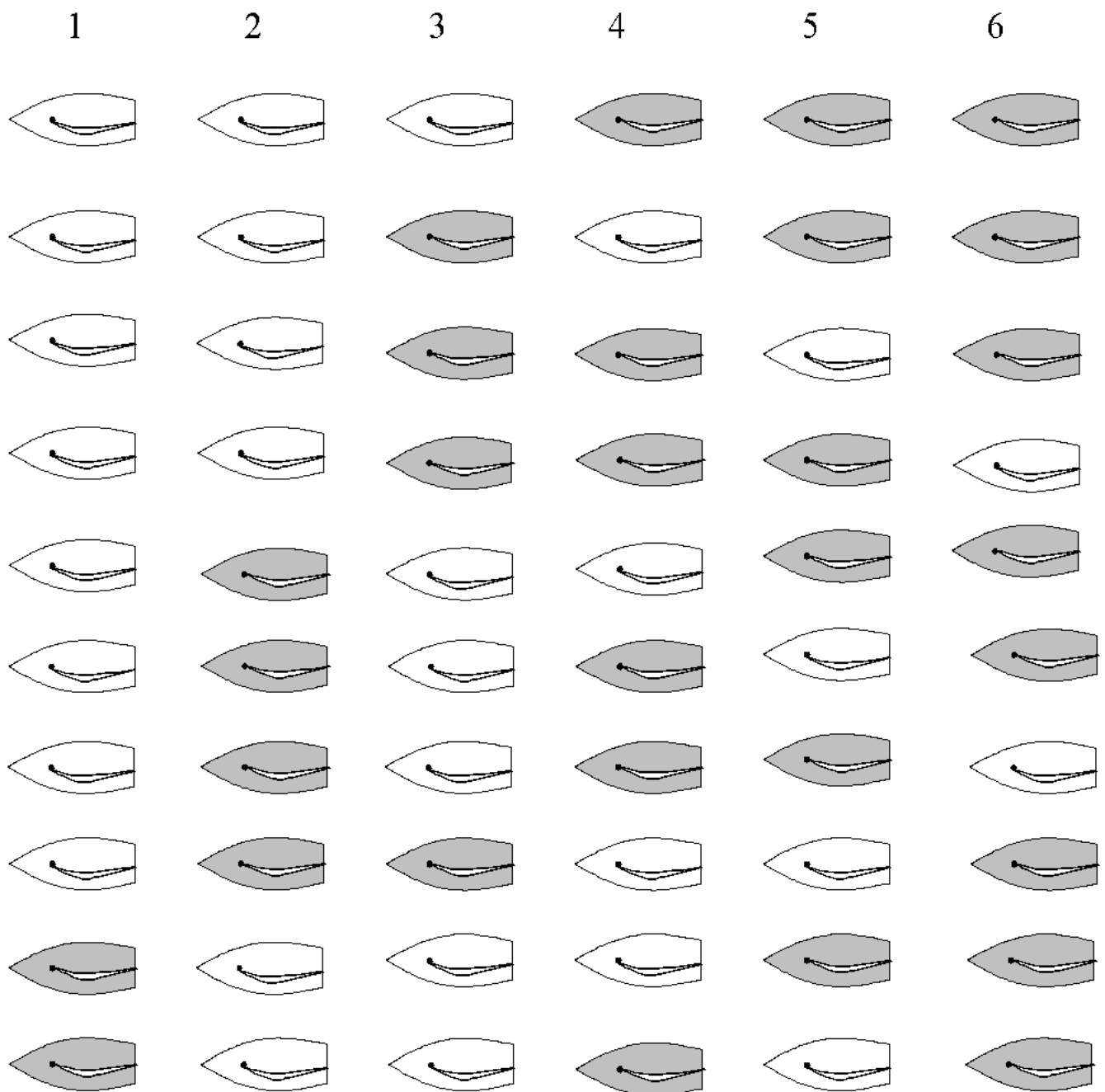
7. Combinations

Team Racing is all about combinations.

In two boat the winning combinations are those that do not include last place.

In three or four boat it is the team with the lowest aggregate score.

Winning combinations in three boat team racing are illustrated by the white boats. The objective of the White team in each case is to improve or at least maintain this winning combination until the finish. The objective of the Greyteam is to gain and then improve a winning combination.



All of this may look very baffling, but there are two simple ways of identifying winning combinations.

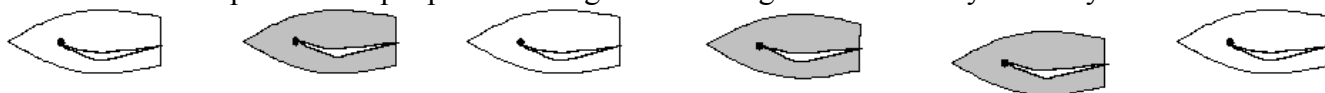
1. Having first but not last (identifies most).
2. Winning two of the three pairs.
3. One-two anything wins.

Position changes can be made in two ways.

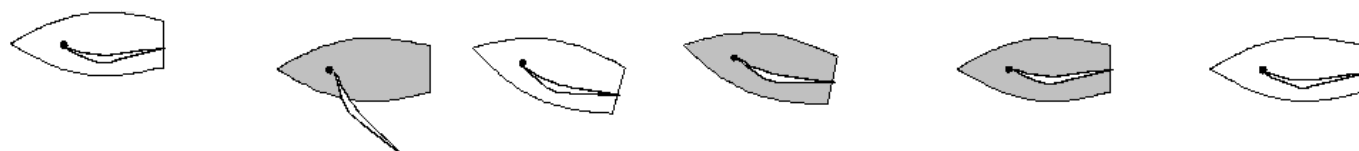
1. Overtaking the boat in front by simple boatspeed.
2. Using a “Passback” against an opponent to bring a team-mate through.

8. Passbacks

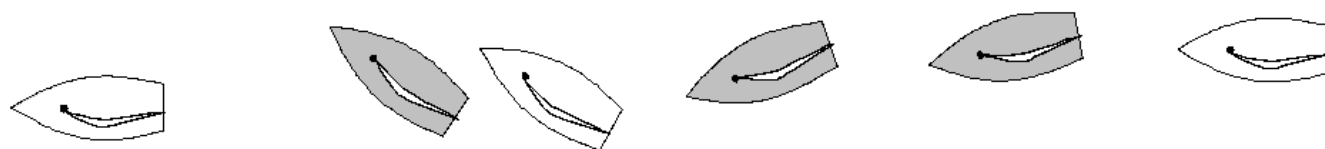
Below is an example of a simple passback to gain a winning combination by the Grey boats.



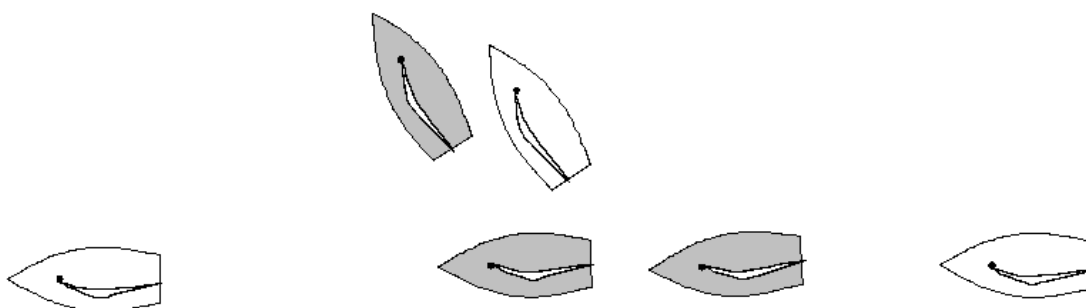
Grey team in 2-4-5 must make conversion to 2-3-4 to win.



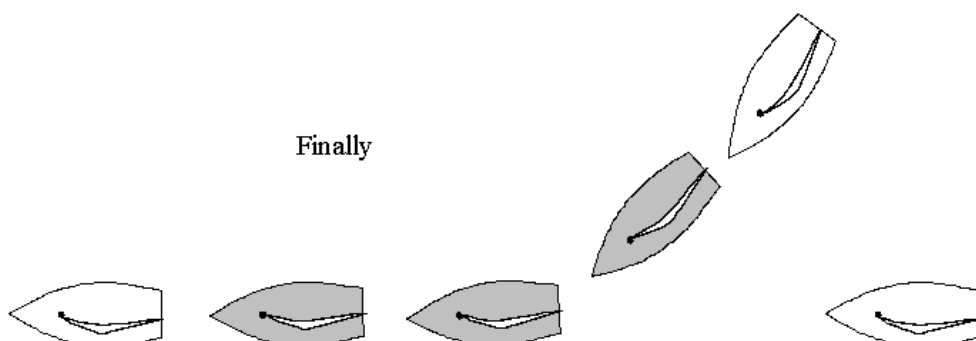
Boat 2 slows, Boat 4 starts to go high, Boat 3 moves up to protect.



As soon as Boat 3 is overlapped to windward of Boat 2, Boat 2 luffs, Boats 4 and 5 bears away



Finally



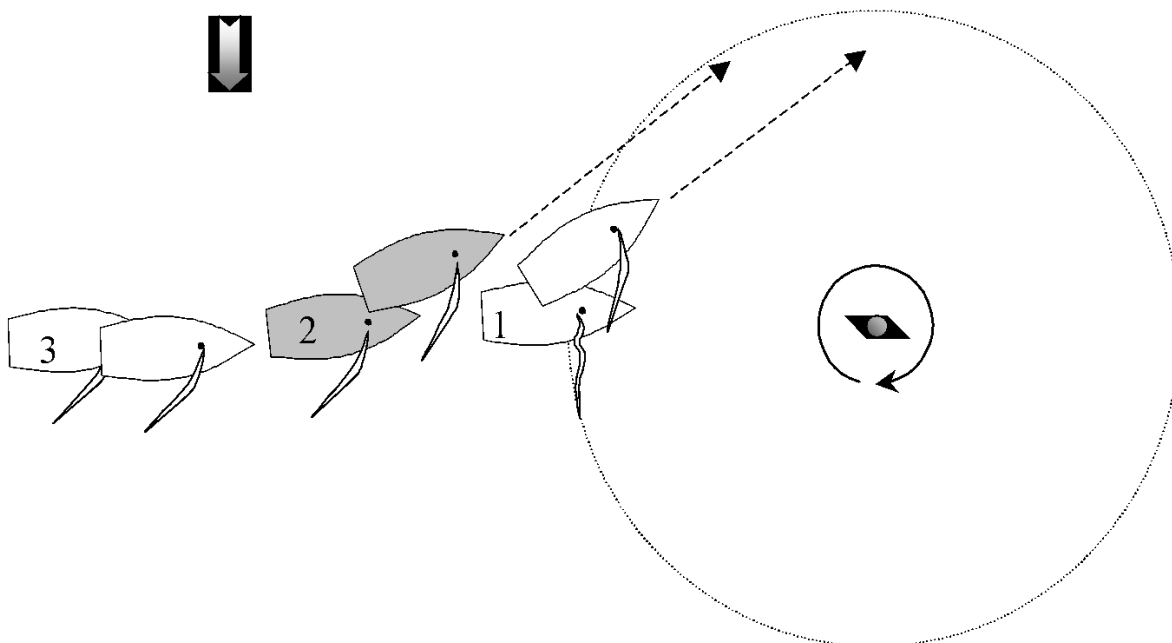
In the above scenario, the key to the shaded team's success is attacking the white team before they attack them. In this case if White Boat 1 had attacked 2 to get boat 3 through, then White would have gained a stronger 1-2-6 combination.

8.1. Types of Passbacks

There are basically two types of Passbacks: The Dynamic and the Static. The above example is a dynamic passback, in as much as the boats concerned are all moving. A static passback involves the attacking boat slowing or stopping- for example a mark trap.

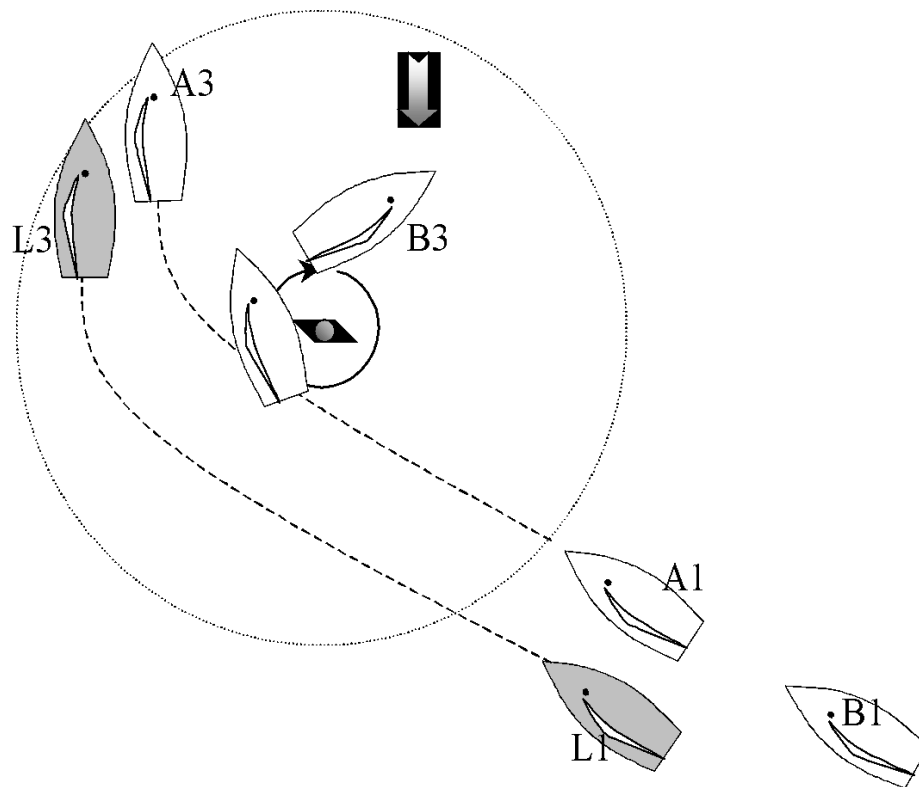
8.2. Mark Traps:

Use the rights and obligations of Rule 18 (Passing Marks and Obstructions) to affect a passback.

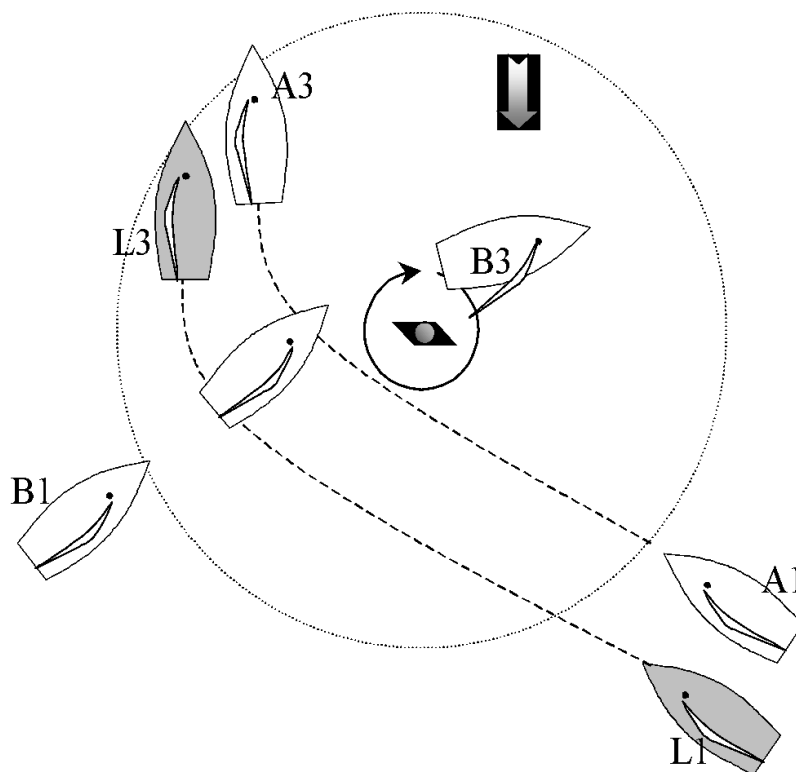


In this example Boat 1 and Boat 3 are on the same team. Boat 1 stops at the two length zone, clear ahead. Boat 2 has no rights to go between Boat 1 and the mark. As soon as Boat 2 establishes a windward overlap, Boat 1 sheets in and luffs up allowing Boat 3 to go around the mark in first place.

The windward Mark is another excellent place to perform a mark trap.



Here A and B are on the same team with L an opponent boat to leeward as they approach the windward mark to be left to starboard. Boat A must be given room to pass and round the mark, but there is nothing that says that she must tack. So instead she can carry on while team mate B is able to tack in astern of both boats. Below the same move by Boat A allows Boat B on Port tack to get through into first.

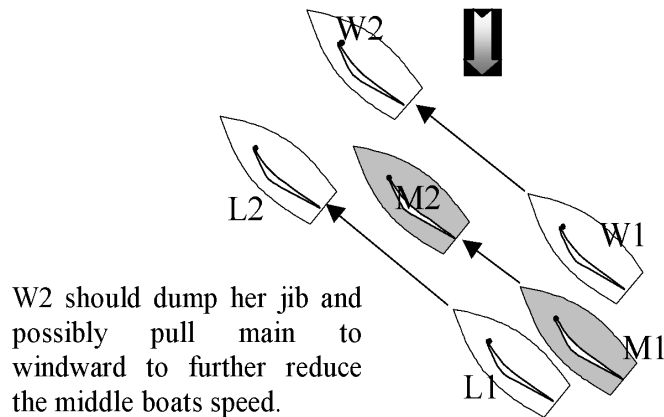


Practicing these Passbacks can best be done with just three boats playing “Piggy in the Middle” on a short beat.

8.3. Upwind Passbacks

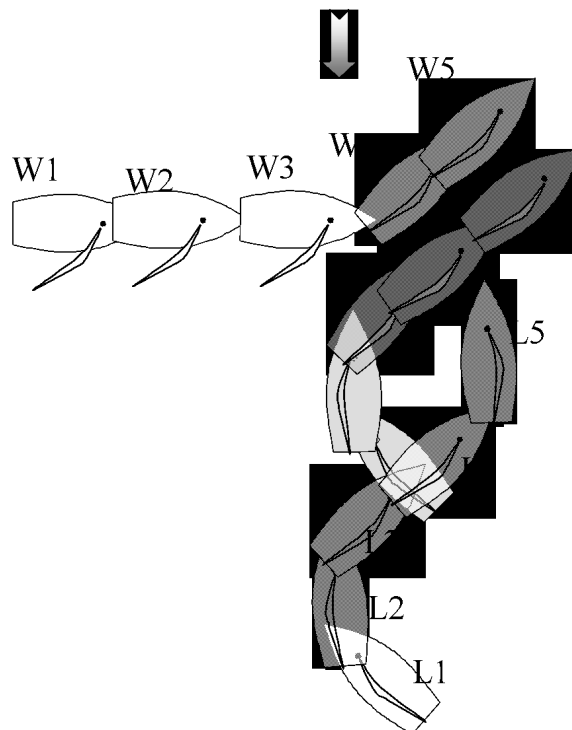
8.3.1. "The Soapdish":

This works well in narrow beamed boats, but can take some time to effect, and means that two boats are attacking a single opponent.



8.3.2. Tacking Out

Using a team-mate to break out from being covered requires that the windward boat acts quickly to "sit on" the opponent just before the leeward boat tacks out. The middle boat can defend her position by keeping very close to the leeward boat so that she can not tack out.

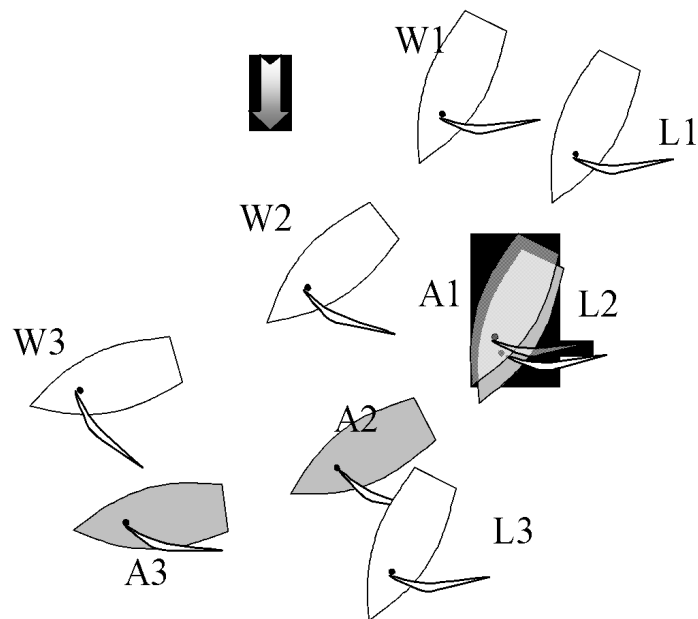


Again this is a manoeuvre which can be practiced with three boats. The move can be broken down into two specific skills, tacking out and tight covering. If totally pinned Boat L might consider gybing out, but this is really only effective at the layline.

8.4. Offwind Passbacks

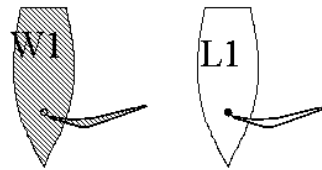
There are two basic moves, which can be used here. The first method is simply to use wind shadow to slow an opponent to allow a team mate to get through. In this case Boats W and L are team mates astern of opponent Boat A. By slowing Boat A down, Boat W gets an overlap to windward. In this case Boat A luffs and Boat L is able to get through to leeward.

8.4.1. Blanketing

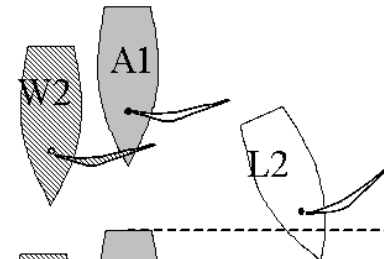


8.4.2. Double Gybing

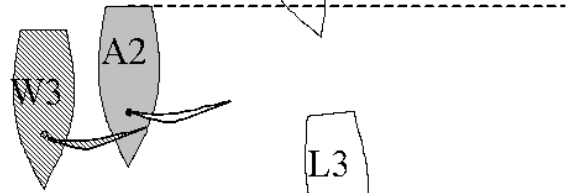
Pos. 1 Team-mates W and L are astern and slowing opponent A



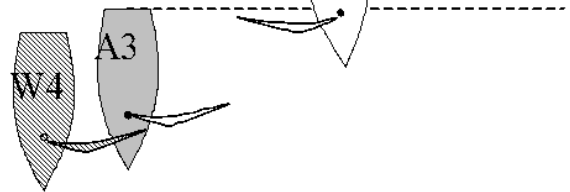
Pos. 2 Boat L gains an overlap from astern. She may not sail above her proper course.



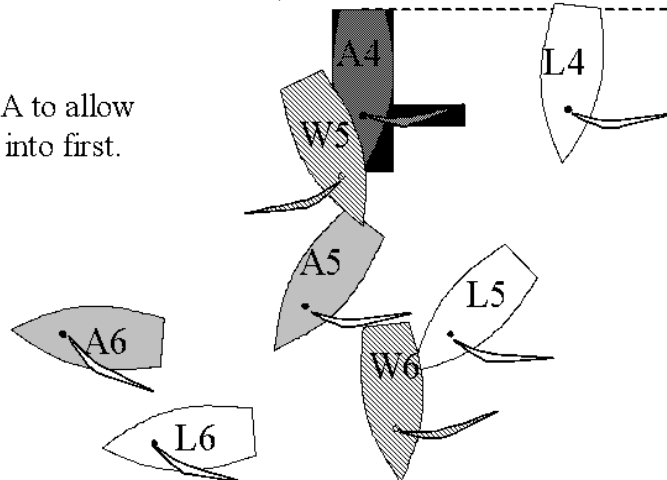
Pos. 3 Boat L gybes. Boat W ensures she does not get overlapped to windward.



Pos. 4 Boat L gybes again. Boat L now has luffing rights. Boat W keeps astern.

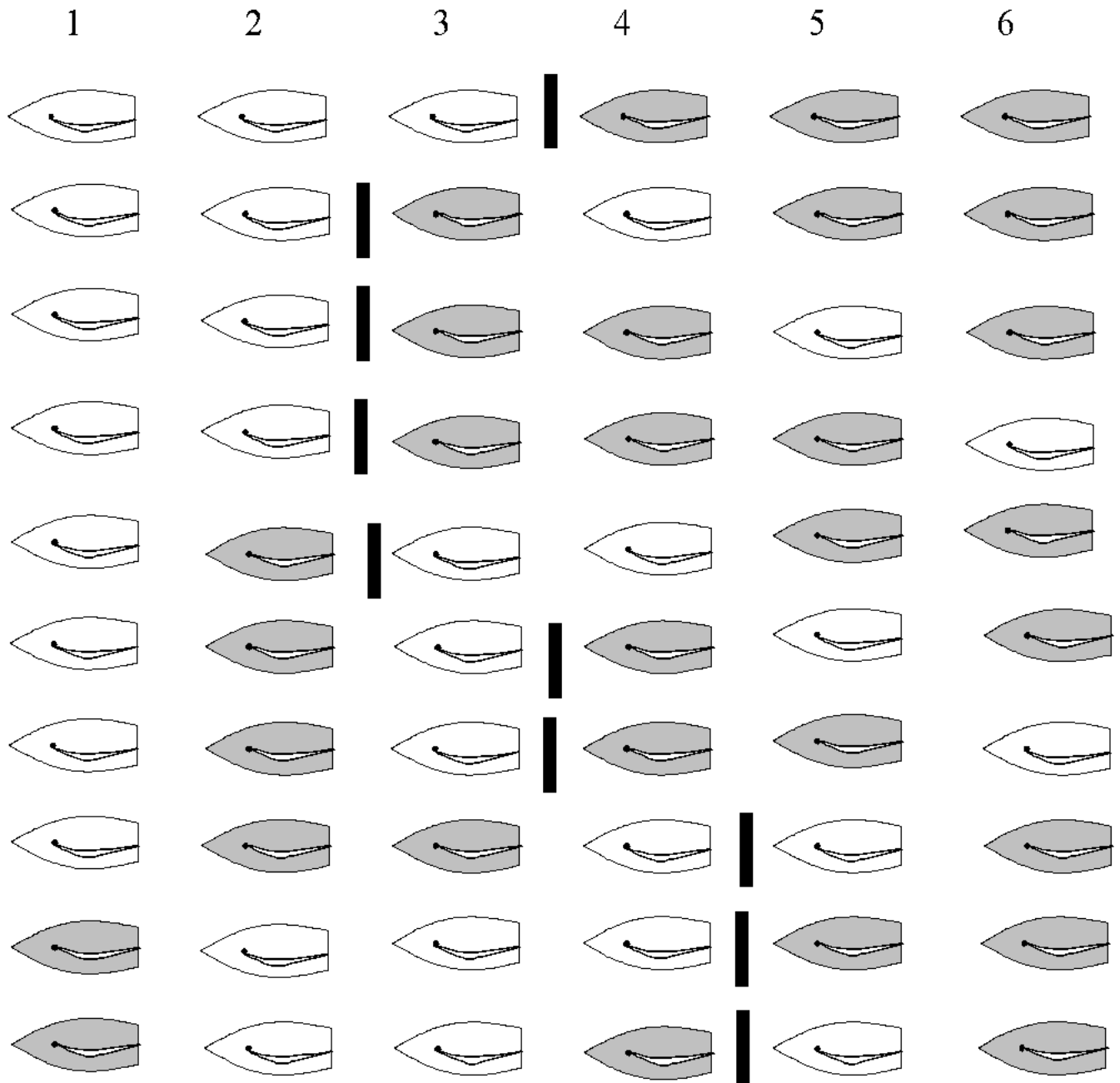


Pos. 5&6 Boat L luffs Boat A to allow team-mate W to go through into first.



9. Team Race Strategy: “Mind the Gap”

Every winning team race combination is vulnerable, some more than others. The key to a successful attack, or defence is to identify the strategic gap and then to understand what your team needs to do with the gap.



In each of the various combinations, an exchange of places at the gap significantly improves the position of the losing team, so the objective of the winning team is to widen the gap to make this jump less possible. Clearly the opposite is true for the losing team.

9.1. Combination Exercises.

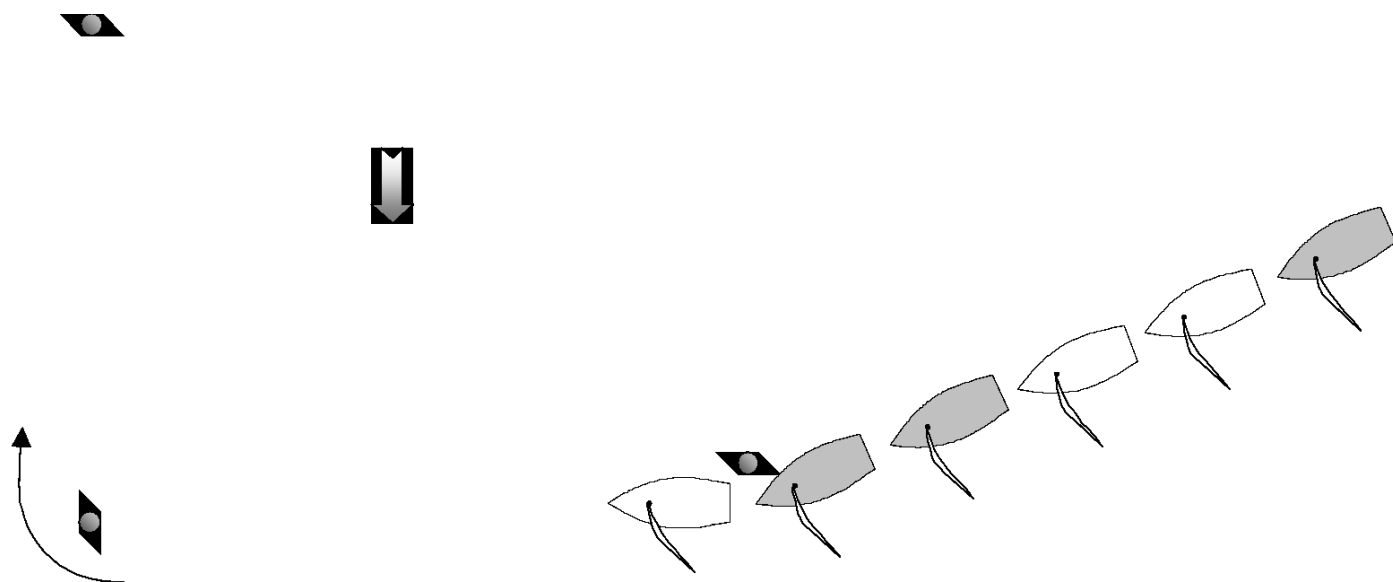
Decide the combination to be practiced, 1-4-5 is probably the best as it is one of the most difficult to defend.

9.1.1. Exercise one.

Fleet or team race to the windward mark, then as the boats round the mark, the order they assume dictates which team they are in. For example if you are practicing 1-4-5 then the 1st, 4th and 5th boats around the mark or on one team and 2nd 3rd and 6th are on the other.

9.1.2. Exercise two.

The six boats line up in the desired combination eg Whites 1-4-5 and Greys 2-3-6 and sail to a mark of the course, keep the boats about half to one boat length apart, and do not start to race until at least one boat length after the mark.



When practicing a final beat in 1-4-5 the penultimate reach is tremendously important to working on the gap. Boat 4 and Boat 5 want to get the gap as big as possible, so Boat 5 wants to be slowing down as much as possible, but at the same time keeping Boat 6 in last place.

9.2. Feedback and Improvement

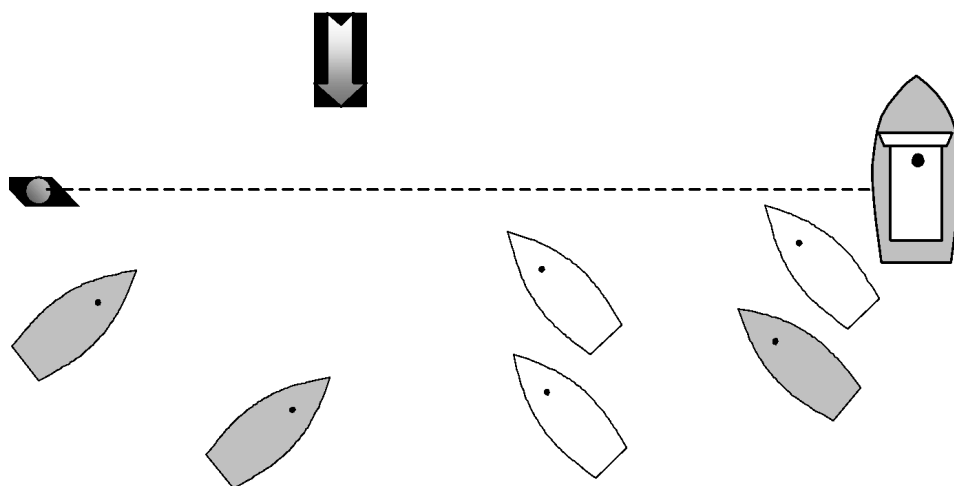
At the end of each exercise the two teams should stop and review what they have done. Decide what went well, and what needs to be done to improve matters. It is often useful to repeat exactly the same sequence to reinforce success and to overcome problems.

10. Starting Practice

There are two main types of start practice. The first is about getting boats on the line and going fast, the second is about starting in such a way that the team is in a winning combination at the windward mark. For the first simple 3-2-1 Go starts, followed after one minute by a recall. 2-1-Go can also be used.

For the second type lay a windward mark and a small offset mark to starboard. This will allow the team to develop starting techniques to maximise their positions.

The team should try to spread themselves along the line (geographical starts) and experiment with port approaches. Additionally the bias of the starting line should be changed to provide practice with differing situations.



11. Communication:

There are four main areas of communication.

11.1. Inside the boat between helm and crew.

In team racing when competitors are likely to sail aggressively against one another, the crew has a very important role in relaying all relevant information about the opposition as well as changes to one's own team positions. Similarly the helm needs to keep the crew involved with what is happening. Given the speed at which things can happen there is often little opportunity to warn about tacks or gybes, instead both need to develop telepathy in this area. Protest procedure needs to be well understood, with clearly defined roles.

11.2. With the rest of the team.

The team needs to spend time off the water discussing the various combinations to understand what each will do in a particular situations. This understanding can be improved through debriefing at the end of exercises and at the end of the day. If there are difficulties between team members these need to be sorted out quickly.

On the water it is vitally important to communicate combination changes to one's team-mates. When you move from 2-3-6 to 2-3-5 let your team-mates know. It is even more important when you lose a combination ie go from 2-3-5 to 2-4-5.

Tactical communication is also important. Often at marks a team-mate will not be able to see if there is a space, so tell them if there is. If you are going to switch pairs on a beat again shout "switch". When teams are safe winning combinations they tend to get relaxed and make silly mistakes by not telling the other team-mate what they intend to do. Collisions at marks are a good example.

11.3. With the Coach:

The coach's job is to help the team to improve. It is essential that the team let the coach know what they want to do, where they feel they have problems and possibly how they think things can be improved. The team also needs to listen to the coach.

11.4. With Officials

Most team racing is Umpired, and most Umpires have a deep understanding of the rules and the sport. They are also very happy to share this knowledge and understanding. It is important to understand the limitations of Umpiring, and the best way to do this is to spend time with an Umpire on the water. It is also useful to ask an Umpire "how did you see that incident?" if you want to develop an understanding of what can and can not be achieved in an umpired environment.

12. Concluding Thoughts

This booklet started as a 5 page general introduction, but has run a little beyond its word limit. Those who wish to pursue the sport to higher levels are recommended to read Steve Tylecote's book of Team Racing which is part of the Fernhurst series.