

HAILING

No – not icy things falling from the sky, but calls made by participants in radio sailing events. I'd like to acknowledge **John Ball** from Canada and thank him for allowing me to use some of the content in this article.

1. What are the requirements for a valid hail?

Both skippers and race committees are required by **Appendix E** to make a hail in a certain way. There are two requirements for a valid hail in radio sailing as follows:

If a competitor makes a hail, it must be made so that the competitor to whom the hail is directed might reasonably hear it.

This does not mean that the other competitor must hear it, but that there is a reasonable expectation that they will. The fact that a skipper may claim that they didn't hear the hail is not an excuse for not reacting. However, the hailing skipper might be wise to have a witness to confirm the volume of the hail was suitable for the prevailing conditions.

The volume of the hail will depend on many things, including how far away the other competitor is standing, the size of the control area and the background noise. If there is a strong wind and skippers are standing far apart, the hail would need to be very loud – even more so if the skipper making the hail was downwind of the intended recipient. Alternatively, if skippers are standing close by one another in light winds, normal conversational levels may suffice.

Any hail calling sail numbers should be made using the individual digits of the sail number. Thus “*seventy six*” is not valid, but “*seven six*” is a valid call.

It is not valid to call “*the red boat*”, or “*that boat at the windward mark*”. In the event that a sail number cannot be identified at the time of the incident, making a call like “*that red boat*” should be followed up with a hail identifying the sail number at the earliest possible opportunity.

2. When MUST a skipper hail?

There are three rules in the **Racing Rules of Sailing** which make hailing mandatory for a skipper. These are:

Rule 20 – Calling for room to tack for an obstruction

Calling a protest under **Rule 61** and

Calling (for example) “*Seven Six; Boat out of control*” under **E2.3**

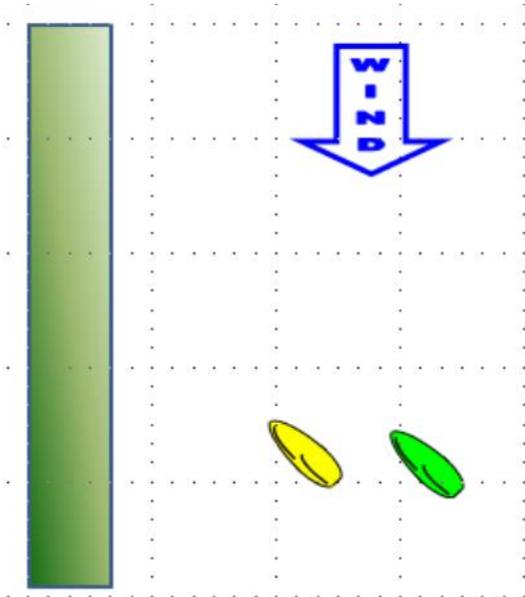
Looking at each of these in detail is a lengthy process, but I shall try to give you a condensed version.

2A. RULE 20

An obstruction is any object that a boat could not pass without changing course substantially. It can be a bank or shoreline, an “out-of-bounds” area, a boat out of radio control or a right-of-way boat.

The most common situation we encounter is when two boats are close hauled approaching a shoreline. The leeward boat (Yellow) is in danger of running aground, but cannot tack without infringing **Rule 13** (a boat tacking must keep clear of a boat on a tack.) on the Green boat. See Figure 1.

Figure 1.



So to avoid boats running aground and collisions, **Rule 20** exists and allows Yellow to hail for ‘Room to tack to avoid an Obstruction’. What happens next is important – Green **MUST** respond even if she feels that the hail is not in accordance with the conditions listed in **20.1**.

The first item is that Yellow must allow Green

TIME to respond – so hailing and tacking simultaneously would be a breach. These rules were originally written for full size boats and the concept of ‘time’ is to allow a crew to get ready and then safely tack a big boat. In RC sailing, the time allowance can be far less as we can respond must faster.

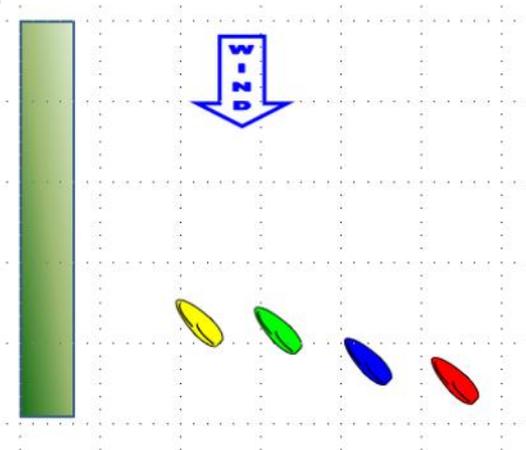
Green has two options, and **SHALL** either tack as soon as possible – or immediately hail back ‘*YOU TACK*’ – in which case, Green gives Yellow enough room to tack and avoids Yellow. Now Yellow must tack as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT: Green **CANNOT** debate with Yellow about the hail. If Green thinks that the hail for room to tack was incorrect, she must still respond as in 20.2 and then promptly hail ‘*Protest*’ for a breach of **R 20.1**.

IMPORTANT: The amount of room required to be given is only room

to tack. Once the tack is complete, the situation is over. This means that if another boat comes along on starboard, that boat is able to force the boats to tack back towards the bank.

Now add in an additional boat or boats. As a reference, please see **Case 113** in the **ISAF Case Book**. See Figure 2:



Q1. *Does rule 20.1 require Red to respond to Yellow's hail?*

Yes. When a boat that is not adjacent to the hailing boat has heard the hail, and will have to respond before the hailing boat is able to tack, she is a 'hailed boat' in the context of **rule 20.1** and she

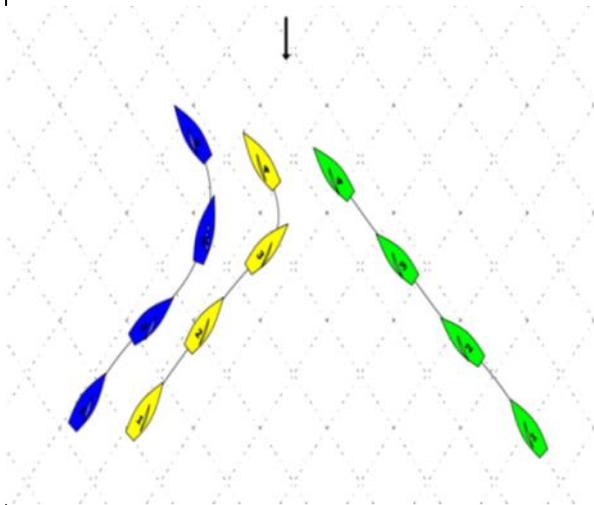
shall respond accordingly.

Q2. *Is Green required to hail Blue or Red for room to tack immediately after she hears Yellow's hail?*

Yes, if Blue is not already responding to Yellow's hail. Replying 'You tack' is not an option for Green or Blue in this case, both are required by **rule 20.1(b)** to respond to Yellow's hail by tacking as soon as possible. Therefore, if Blue or Green cannot tack because of the presence of Red, then Blue must immediately hail Red for room to tack. If she fails to do this, and as a result is unable to tack as soon as possible, she breaks **rule 20.1(b)**.

Another common situation requiring a hail is when two boats close hauled on port tack approach a right of way starboard boat. The star-

board boat is an obstruction for both boats.



In Figure 3, the yellow boat has right of way over the blue boat, but is required to keep clear of the green boat. If yellow decides to tack, she cannot just tack without hailing for room to tack and allowing the blue boat time to respond. The

blue boat does not have to anticipate the course which yellow will sail.

Yellow must hail "*Room to tack blue*" Blue must respond and yellow must tack immediately. Yellow cannot hail for room to tack, and then sail behind the transom of green.

If yellow decides to sail a course behind green's transom, and blue also sails behind green, then blue is able to hail for room to pass between the yellow boat and the obstruction (the green boat). Yellow must allow room for blue to pass through that gap.

IMPORTANT: When must a skipper **NOT** hail for room to tack:

If the obstruction can be passed without having to make a substantial change of course.

If the boat is not sailing close hauled

The obstruction is a mark of the course, and the other boat is fetching it.

2B. PROTEST SITUATIONS

The **Racing Rules** are very specific when it comes to hailing another boat for a protest. **Rule E6.3** tells us that a skipper shall inform the other boat of the intention to protest by hailing **TWICE**: “(her own sail number) protest (the sail number of the other boat)”.

Thus “*Three Eight protest Seven Six; Three Eight protest Seven Six*” is a valid hail, but “*Hey Seventy Six, I’m protesting you*” is not. At a protest hearing, you risk having your protest thrown out if you have not hailed correctly.

What about if you are the boat being protested? There is no requirement for any hail if you are being protested. However, it is good practice to acknowledge the protest hail and indicate either that you will complete a penalty turn, or that you will “*see them in the protest room*”. This saves many arguments and unpleasant discussions at the lakeside.

Another hail which is not mandatory, but is a really good idea, is hailing when you have completed a penalty turn. This alerts the race committee or observers that you have taken a penalty and exonerated yourself from an infringement. The other benefit of making this hail, is that whilst you are completing a penalty turn, you have no rights. Your rights under the rules return once the penalty is complete.

2C. OUT OF RADIO CONTROL

If a boat loses radio control, the skipper is required to hail “(Sail number) *Out of Control*” and then retire from the race. Once that call is made, there is no option to return to the race, and the other boats are required to treat the boat out of control as an obstruction.

3. Hails by a Race Committee

The Race Committee have three hails which are mandatory as follows:

Individual recall

General Recall and

Observer's calls for contact between boats, or contact with a mark of the course.

3A. INDIVIDUAL RECALL

In the event of an individual recall, the race committee is required to hail "*Recall (sail number), Recall (sail number)*". That is – they must hail the sail number twice. There are many examples of incorrect hailing when it comes to individual recalls, with race officers hailing things like "*Over seventy six*", or "*Come back seventy six*".

In the event of multiple boats receiving an individual recall, the hail must be clear as to which boats are required to return to the pre-start side of the start line. For example, if a race officer hails "*recall one, four seven, recall one, four seven*", it is unclear whether there are three or two boats recalled, or just one boat (one four seven). Therefore, the hail must be as follows:

"recall one four, recall seven; recall one four, recall seven" This makes it clear that sail number "one four" and sail number "seven" are the boats which have broken the start.

3B. GENERAL RECALLS

Rule E3.6 tells us that the race committee should hail "*general recall*" and make two sound signals. They may repeat the hail as appropriate.

3C. OBSERVERS CALLS

If an observer hails for contact with a mark of the course, or contact between boats, they are required to hail the sail numbers twice. Therefore the correct call would be either:

“Contact with the mark, seven six; contact with the mark seven six” or

“Contact seven four and seven six, contact seven four and seven six”

4. Addendum Q (Races with Umpires)

This is a specific note for skippers who are competing in regattas with umpired races. (**Addendum Q**)

In **Addendum Q** regattas, **Rule 20** is amended to require a boat calling for room to tack at an obstruction to hail their sail number prior to hailing for room to tack. Therefore, the correct hail would be:

“Nine four needs room to tack, nine four needs room to tack”

It would be wise to make these calls allowing enough time to get the hail complete, and allow time for the other boats to respond.

There have been a number of situations in recent regattas in which hailing has been an issue. Taking time to understand the correct hailing requirements should make for better quality sailing regattas, remove disappointment through technicalities and clean up some of the unruly discussion which occasionally affects our events.

Glenn Dawson