

RULE 18.2 — GIVING MARK-ROOM

(a) **When the first of two boats reaches the zone,**

(1) **if the boats are overlapped, the outside boat at that moment shall give the inside boat mark-room;**

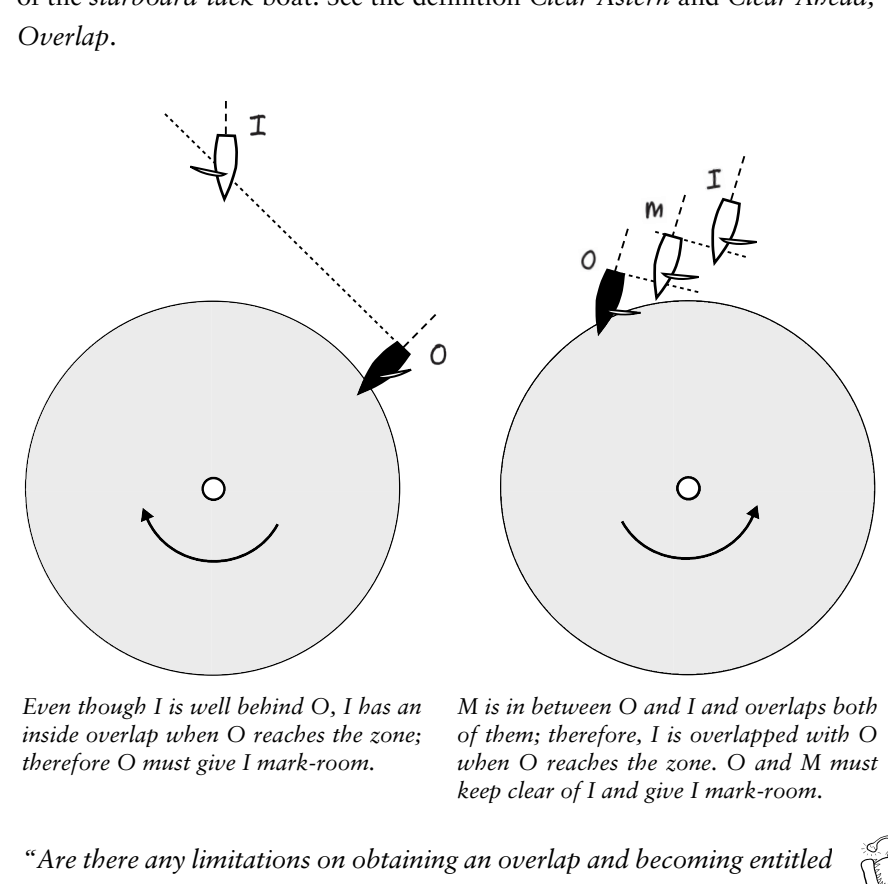
Note, rule 18.2(a)(1) is "talking" only to overlapped boats. Rule 18.2(a)(2) deals with boats that are not overlapped.

Remember, a boat is "overlapped" with another if her bow or equipment in normal position (such as the spinnaker or extended bowsprit) is on or across a line drawn abeam through the aftermost point of the other boat's hull and equipment in normal position. Also, two boats that otherwise are not overlapped technically become overlapped when a boat in between them overlaps both of them. So if you are approaching a mark to be left to port and are just overlapped on the port transom of the boat ahead of you, and she is just overlapped on the port transom of the boat ahead of her, you are technically overlapped with the boat ahead of her (see the definition *Clear Astern* and *Clear Ahead; Overlap*). Therefore you are entitled to mark-room from both boats if you are overlapped when the farthest boat ahead arrives at the zone.

Also remember that, by definition, two boats overlap when the bow or equipment in normal position of one is over the line drawn through the aftermost part of the other, even when the boats are a quarter of a mile apart.

"Can boats on opposite tacks be overlapped?"

Yes. Boats on opposite tacks are overlapped when rule 18 applies to them, or when they are both sailing more than ninety degrees from the true wind. This becomes important as boats approach the leeward mark on opposite tacks on widely differing angles. For instance, say that two boats are reaching on opposite tacks to a leeward mark to be left to starboard. When the starboard tack boat (S) reaches the zone, the port tack boat (P) is five lengths from the mark, but based on the angle of S's course, P is overlapped on the inside of S. There-



Even though I is well behind O, I has an inside overlap when O reaches the zone; therefore O must give I mark-room.

M is in between O and I and overlaps both of them; therefore, I is overlapped with O when O reaches the zone. O and M must keep clear of I and give I mark-room.

"Are there any limitations on obtaining an overlap and becoming entitled to the rights in rule 18.2(a)(1)?"

Yes, there are two:

- 1) the boat astern cannot obtain an inside overlap and become entitled to mark-room once the boat ahead reaches the zone clear ahead of the boat astern (rule 18.2(a)); and
- 2) the outside boat is not required to give mark-room if she has been physically unable to give the inside boat mark-room from the time the overlap began (18.2(d)).

Up to 1965, a boat clear astern could get a legal inside overlap as long as it was (a) in time to enable the outside boat(s) to give room; (b) before the boat ahead changed her course in the act of rounding; and (c) before any part of the boat ahead came abreast of the mark. Things were often a tad out of control as boats came barreling up from astern yelling for "buoy room" at the last second.

In 1965 the rule writers took a creative step. Realizing that there ought to be some "cutoff point" after which a boat clear astern could not obtain an inside overlap, they devised a safety zone now simply called "the zone," which has proved to work very effectively. And because the "point" can be in any direction from the mark, the zone is an imaginary area with the mark in the center and having a radius of three of the nearer boat's hull lengths; for instance, 72 feet in a Melges 24. Note the fact that it is the nearer boat's hull lengths; this becomes important when the boats are different sizes (see the definition *Zone*).

Rule 18.2(a)(2) says, "When the first of two boats reaches the zone...if the boats are not overlapped, the boat that has not reached the zone at that moment shall give the other boat mark-room." And rule 18.2(a) continues, "When a boat is required to give mark-room by this rule, she shall continue to do so for as long as this rule applies, even if later an overlap is broken or a new overlap begins." So the game ends at the zone. If you are catching up from astern but don't get the inside overlap before the boat ahead of you gets to the zone, then you are not entitled to the rights in rule 18.2(a) and you must give the boat ahead mark-room under rule 18.2(a). If you do get the inside overlap before she gets to the zone, then you are entitled to the rights in rule 18.2(a). So often the race is not to the mark...it is to the zone!

"What if I physically can't give room to the boat that just obtained the inside overlap on me?"

That's the second exception to rule 18.2(a). When a boat gets an overlap on you just before you reach the zone, she becomes entitled to mark-room under rule 18.2(a)(1) as an inside boat. However, you are not required to anticipate her arrival. There are times, though very rare, when you may be physically unable to give her the room she needs to round or pass the mark from the time the overlap began, based on your situation at that moment. Rule 18.2(d) says, "If a boat obtained an inside overlap from clear astern or by tacking to windward of the other boat and, from the time the overlap began, the outside boat has been unable to give mark-room, rules 18.2(a) and 18.2(c) do not apply between them." In this situation, the inside boat is not entitled to mark-room and the applicable rules of Section A and B apply. If she becomes the right-of-way boat, she must comply with rule 15 (Acquiring Right of Way) which means she won't get inside at the mark because if the outside boat could have created enough room to do so, she would have done so in the first place. And if she is a keep-clear boat, she must keep clear.

One example of where this situation might occur is a tightly packed mark rounding in light air where a boat astern gets an inside overlap on a boat that is three and a half boat-lengths from the mark, but there's just no way the outside boat can get everyone else outside of her to move away from the mark in time to create room for the new inside boat. Another example is when two boats are going so fast that by the time the outside boat can react to her new obligation and make the room, the inside boat is already past the mark on the wrong side. Twelve knots of boat-speed equals about 20 feet per second, so on a windy reach a Hobie 18 will chew up three boat-lengths in less than three seconds!

"What if at a port-hand windward mark the boat ahead of me, or overlapped outside of me, didn't reach the zone clear ahead of me, but instead they approached on the opposite tack and then tacked inside the zone?"

If you are approaching a windward mark to be left to port on starboard tack and a boat comes in on port tack and tacks inside the zone and is clear ahead of you when she completes her tack, you can obtain an inside overlap and become entitled to mark-room under rule 18.3 (Tacking in the Zone). Note, when rule 18.3 applies, rule 18.2 does not apply. So if the boat that tacked is unable to give you mark-room, tough luck on her; she breaks rule 18.3. And if a boat tacks within the zone into an outside overlap on you, she must give you mark-room at the mark as well under rule 18.3. See the full discussion of rule 18.3 in chapter 9.

"OK, thanks for that. So if I'm the outside boat, can you remind me when I have to start giving the inside boat mark-room?"

You have to start giving mark-room the moment rule 18 begins to apply, which is when the hull of the first of the boats involved reaches the zone, which is normally three lengths from the mark. It is at this point that outside/right-of-way boats need to yield their right of way and provide the inside/keep-clear boats the space they need to sail to and around the mark.

"So if I'm the outside boat and required to give mark-room, how much room do I have to give the inside boat?"

Well, first you have to understand what "room" means, and then what "mark-room" means. Remember, the rules are creating the sport of sailboat racing, and the terms in the rules should be interpreted in that context. "Mark-room" is "Room for a boat (a) to sail to the mark when her proper course is to sail close to it, (b) to round or pass the mark on the required side, and (c) to leave it astern (see the definition *Mark-Room*). "Room" is "the space a boat needs in the existing conditions, including space to comply with her obligations under the rules of Part 2 and rule 31, while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanlike way" (see the definition *Room*).

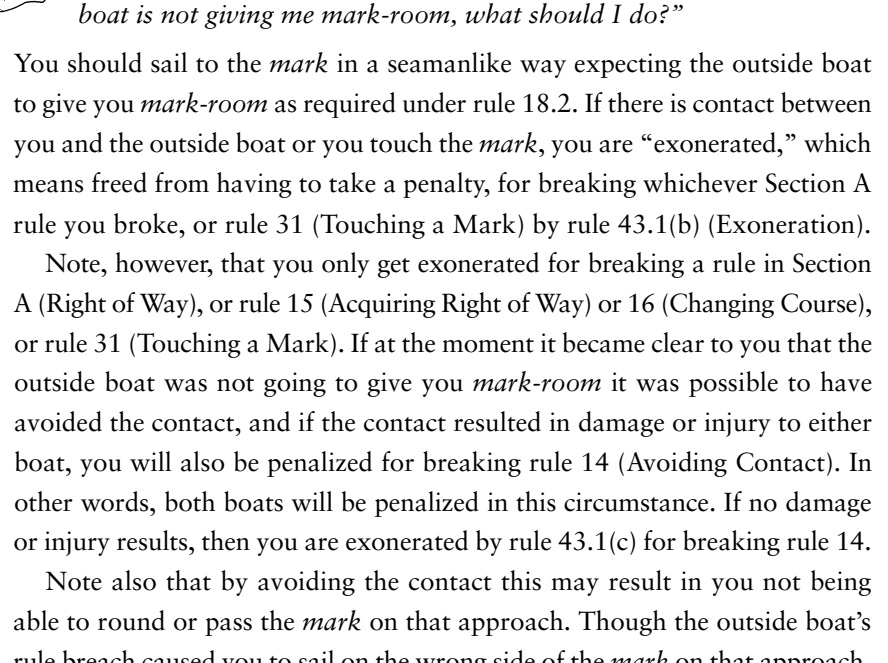
So "mark-room" is the space the inside boat "needs" in the existing conditions to round or pass the mark on the required side in a "seamanlike way" onto whatever course she needs to be sailing to begin the next leg without risk of touching the mark or fouling the outside boat.

Let's assume the inside boat's proper course is to sail close to the mark, say within a couple of feet or so as it will be when she is rounding the mark. First, you have to give her the space she needs to sail to the mark, which means close to the mark on the required side of the mark (see Case 118). And you have to give her the space she needs to sail to the mark in a "seamanlike way" (meaning safe; not putting her boat or crew at risk of damage or injury, or at risk of touching the mark; sailed the way competent, but not expert, sailors would sail to the mark) in the existing conditions. A boat will need more space if it is windy and wavy, and less space if it is light air and smooth; just as a boat will need more space if it has a lot of sail hanging to do, and less space if it has only one sail to deal with. (See Cases 21 and 118.)

Note: room does not include space for the inside boat to sail her proper course to the mark; i.e., the space the inside boat might like to set up for a tactically desirable "swing wide-cut close" type rounding, though in actual practice most outside boats are a little more forgiving. (See Appeal 20.)

Now let's assume the boats will have to change course around the mark to begin sailing the next leg. Next, you have to give the inside boat the space she needs to round the mark onto whatever course she needs to be sailing to begin the next leg without risk of touching the mark or fouling the outside boat. At a windward mark, that will be a downwind course. At a leeward mark, that will be a close-hauled course. And again, it is just the space the boat "needs" to round the mark and begin sailing the next leg. It is not as much room as they would like to make a tactical "swing wide/cut close" rounding (see Cases 21 and 118 and Appeals 3 and 20).

Finally, you have to be sure she has the space she needs to leave the mark on the required side and to leave it astern.



"What if I'm the inside boat and I need to gybe; do I get room for that too?"

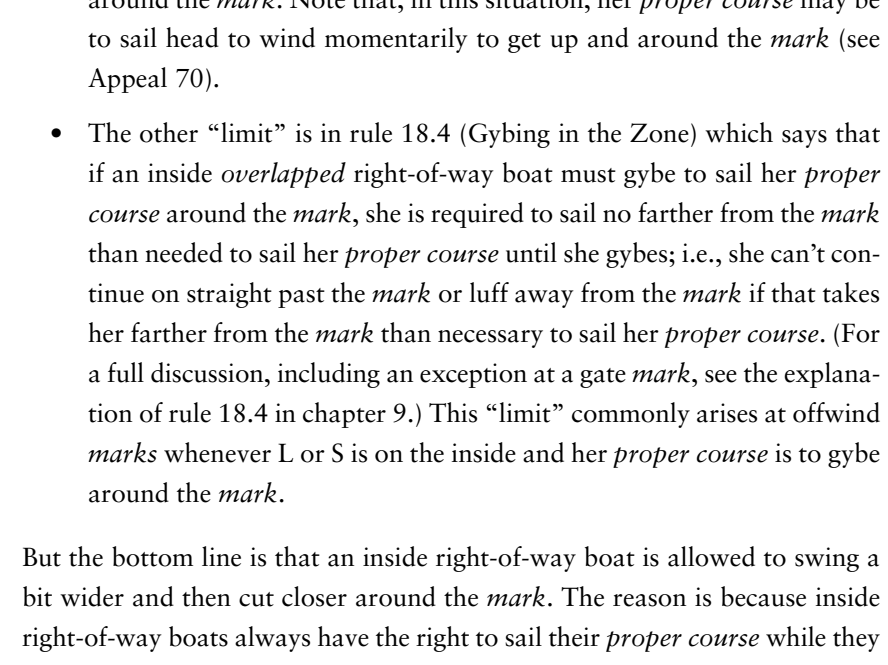
If you need to gybe to round the mark in order to begin sailing the next leg, then yes, mark-room includes enough space for your boom to come across and your stern to swing when you gybe to round the mark. This is common at leeward marks when the inside boat needs to gybe to round the mark. (See Case 75.)

"Do I also get room to gybe around a windward mark or an offset going onto a run?"

Not if you are clear ahead and rounding close to the windward mark onto a run (where you will spend time on both tacks), you do not need to gybe in order to begin sailing the next leg, even though gybing may be your proper course. Therefore, mark-room does not include room to gybe in that situation.

"How about when I'm a windward/inside boat coming into the windward mark or rounding the leeward mark; am I entitled to room to tack around the mark?"

No, "Mark-room" is the room you need to sail to the mark, which may include tacking when approaching a windward mark. So as you begin heading up as



part of your tack, the outside boat has to give you room to change course. But the rule that entitles you to mark-room, rule 18 (Mark-Room), shuts off the moment you pass head to wind (see rules 18.1(a)(1) and 18.2(b)). That means that the moment you pass head to wind you are no longer entitled to mark-room and will be penalized if you break rule 13 (While Tacking). So be careful your stern does not hit the leeward boat after you pass head to wind. And when you are rounding a leeward mark onto a windward leg, you have already been given room to sail to the mark, so you must keep clear as a windward boat.

"Rule 18.1(b) says that rule 18 no longer applies once the boat entitled to mark-room has been given mark-room. When has a boat been given mark-room?"

Rule 18.1(b) states, "Rule 18 no longer applies between boats when mark-room has been given." A boat has been given mark-room when she has received all the room (space) she is entitled to in the definition *Mark-Room* (see Cases 21 and 118). Specifically,

- 1) the boat has the space she needs to sail "to" the mark, if the boat's proper course will bring her within a couple of feet of the mark;
- 2) the boat has the space she needs to round or pass the mark on the required side, i.e., sail onto the course needed to begin the next leg or to finish;

- 3) while rounding or passing the mark, the boat can keep clear of the boat giving her mark-room without risk of touching the mark or fouling another boat; and
- 4) the boat has the space she needs to leave the mark astern.

Note, this might occur before she has left the mark astern when there are no mitigating circumstances.

"What if I am sailing short-handed or my crew is inexperienced; do I get more room as a result?"

No. A boat is not entitled to more space than usual just because her crew is short-handed or inexperienced. Case 103 addresses this head on by saying, "Neither the experience of IW's crew nor their number is relevant in determining 'room'...the interpretation of 'seamanlike way' must be based on the boat-handling that can reasonably be expected from a competent, but not expert, crew of the appropriate number for the boat."

The moment a boat has been given mark-room, rule 18 ceases to apply, meaning she is no longer "sailing within the room or mark-room" to which she was entitled" under rule 18.2. This means she is no longer "protected" by rule 43.1(b) (Exonerated). She is subject to the rules in Section A and B, and must comply with those rules or risk penalty.

"Can you explain what you mean by 'protected by rule 43.1(b)'?"

Sure. There are times when the inside boat is a keep-clear boat (a windward or port-tack boat) and she is sailing to and around the mark in a seamanlike way as she is entitled to by mark-room, but she nevertheless has contact with an outside right-of-way boat or the outside right-of-way boat has to change course to give her mark-room. In that case the inside keep-clear boat has broken rule 10 (port/starboard) or rule 11 (windward/leeward), both rules of Part 2, Section A. Or sometimes the outside boat does not give the inside boat enough room and the inside boat is forced to touch the mark breaking rule 31 (Touching a Mark). Rule 43.1(b) (Exonerated) is the rule that "exonerates" the inside boat, meaning she is freed from being penalized for her breach.

Next, the question of how much room an outside boat must give to an inside boat depends on whether the outside boat is a "right-of-way" boat or a "keep-clear" boat.

WHEN THE OUTSIDE BOAT IS THE RIGHT-OF-WAY BOAT:

When the outside boat has the right-of-way, she only needs to give the inside boat mark-room, and no more space than that (see the discussion above). Note that rule 18.2(d) does not shift the right of way from the outside/right-of-way boat to the inside/keep-clear boat. But clearly the obligation to give mark-room conflicts with rule 10 (On Opposite Tacks) and rule 11 (On the Same Tack, Overlapped) in Section A. In other words, when a starboard-tack boat (S) and a port-tack boat (P), or a leeward boat (L) and a windward boat (W), are rounding a mark with P or W on the inside, S or L has a "temporary obligation" to give P or W mark-room. After fulfilling that obligation, S and L will get their full rights back under rules 10 or 11.

Furthermore, if a keep-clear boat sails farther from the mark than allowed under mark-room, and she breaks a rule in Section A, she is not entitled to exoneration by rule 43.1(b) (Exonerated). For instance, when a windward/inside boat (WI) is slow in coming up to close-hauled around a mark and contact occurs between her and a leeward/outside boat, WI breaks rule 11 (On the Same Tack, Overlapped); and if it is found by a protest committee that she took more room than was needed to round the mark, she is not exonerated by rule 43.1(b). (See Case 25 and Appeals 3 and 20.)

Remember, the primary purpose of rule 18 is to allow boats to round or pass a mark without the inside boats getting wedged in between the outside boats and the mark, or getting forced onto the wrong side of the mark; and to create an orderly transition from one leg of the race to the next. As discussed above, sometimes these outside boats are going to otherwise have the right of way. Rule 18 requires them to give only enough room (space) for the inside boat to round or pass the mark in a seamanlike way. The moment the inside boat has been able to round or pass the mark without risk of touching the mark or the outside boat (i.e., has been given mark-room), the purpose of rule 18 has been served. At that moment the outside/right-of-way boat gets her full rights back, and the inside/keep-clear boat must keep clear. This is made clear in rule 18.1(b) which states, "Rule 18 no longer applies between boats when mark-room has been given."

For example, let's say that two overlapped boats on port tack are rounding the leeward mark onto a beat. The leeward/outside boat (LO) is allowing enough space for the windward/inside boat (WI) to round the mark as quickly as possible, but LO is trying to keep her bow just ahead of WI. As WI comes up to close-hauled, LO luffs at a medium rate. WI responds by luffing and tacking onto starboard-tack. She keeps clear of LO and does not hit the mark or tack too close to any boat about to pass the mark. No foul. LO gave WI room to round the mark, and when LO asserted her rights as a leeward boat, WI was able to keep clear in a seamanlike way without hitting the mark or fouling a boat, and to leave the mark astern.

Note that the circumstances will weigh heavily in determining exactly when the outside boat can assert her rights. If there are a lot of boats near the mark such that WI could not tack without fouling them under rule 15 (Acquiring Right of Way), LO will have to be careful to allow WI the room needed to sail between LO and the mark without tacking. If there is current or strong wind or waves, LO will again have to wait until WI can clear the mark without risk of losing speed and being pushed back into the mark. But if there are no mitigating circumstances, WI may be able to respond safely to LO's luff even before she has left the mark astern.

"Well, if I'm the inside boat and required to keep clear and the outside boat is not giving me mark-room, what should I do?"

You should sail to the mark in a seamanlike way expecting the outside boat to give you mark-room as required under rule 18.2. If there is contact between you and the outside boat or you touch the mark, you are "exonerated," which means freed from having to take a penalty, for breaking whichever Section A rule you broke, or rule 31 (Touching a Mark) by rule 43.1(b) (Exonerated). Note, however, that you only get exonerated for breaking a rule in Section A (Right of Way), or rule 15 (Acquiring Right of Way) or 16 (Changing Course), or rule 31 (Touching a Mark). If at the moment it became clear to you that the outside boat was not going to give you mark-room it was possible to have avoided the contact, and if the contact resulted in damage or injury to either boat, you will both be penalized for breaking rule 14 (Avoiding Contact). In other words, both boats will be penalized in this circumstance. If no damage or injury results, then you are exonerated by rule 43.1(c) for breaking rule 14.

Note also that by avoiding the contact this may result in you not being able to round or pass the mark on that approach. Though the outside boat's rule breach prevented you to sail on the wrong side of the mark on that approach, it hasn't prevented you from ultimately rounding the mark correctly as required by rule 28.1 (Sailing the Course); i.e., she didn't compel you to break rule 28.1. Therefore, unfortunately, you are not entitled to exoneration under rule 43.1(a) (Exonerated) or redress under rule 61.4(b) (Redress Decisions); you must circle around and try again. You should certainly win your protest against the outside boat, but there is nothing the protest committee can do to compensate you for the distance/pace/time lost while making a second try to round or pass the mark.

"What happens when I have an inside overlap when the boats reach the zone, but once inside the zone the outside boat breaks the overlap?"

You are still entitled to mark-room under rule 18.2(a)(1). Rule 18.2(a) says, "When a boat is required to give mark-room by this rule, she shall continue to do so for as long as this rule applies, even if later an overlap is broken or a new overlap begins." So as long as you are overlapped when one of the boats reaches the zone, your right to mark-room under rule 18.2(a) is "locked in" until you have been given mark-room, or until you pass head to wind or sail completely out of the zone (see rule 18.2(b)).

"What happens when boats on the outside that are giving room to boats on the inside never get to the zone until after they've turned and begun heading for the marks; now can a boat that was well clear astern and also outside the zone suddenly claim room?"

Yes! When the boat(s) outside the zone begin heading for the mark and become overlapped with boats that had previously been clear astern of them, they now become outside overlapped boats and required to give the inside boats mark-room under rule 18.2(a)(1).

"Does the inside boat have to call for mark-room in order to get it?"

No. When you are on the inside at a mark, you are not required to call for room, although that is a prudent thing to do to avoid misunderstandings. Boats are expected to know their obligations under the rules, which includes outside boats at marks.

"Now is anything of this different when the inside boat also has the right of way?"

Well, everything we've talked about regarding mark-room is the same; but the fundamental difference is that when the inside boat has the right of way, she can sail her "proper course" from the moment she enters the zone (and she can sail even farther from a gate mark than her proper course would take her if she is not subject to rule 17, On the Same Tack; Proper Course; see rule 18.4, Gybing in the Zone). Whereas if the inside boat does not have the right-of-way, she can only sail a "seamanlike" course from the time she enters the zone. That permits the inside right-of-way boat to set up for a tactical "swing wide/cut close" type of rounding (sometimes called a "practical" or "proper course" rounding) before she is at the mark, whereas the inside keep-clear boat will have to begin her rounding a little closer to the mark.

WHEN THE INSIDE BOAT IS THE RIGHT-OF-WAY BOAT:

When the inside boat has the right-of-way under Section A (Right of Way) of the rules, the outside boat must keep clear. This does not change just because the boats are rounding or passing a mark. Therefore, not only is the inside/right-of-way boat entitled to mark-room; she is free to sail where she pleases, with just a couple of possible limits. Therefore, the right-of-way boat has more freedom in the zone.

There are two situations where the inside right-of-way boat will have a "limit" as she sails to and around a mark:

- One such "limit" is in rule 17 (On the Same Tack; Proper Course) which limits to sailing no higher than her proper course when she becomes overlapped from clear astern. Therefore, at a windward mark, if LI (leeward/inside) becomes overlapped from clear astern on the inside of a boat that has just tacked in front of her inside the zone (such that rule 18.3, Tacking in the Zone, applies), LI must sail her proper course around the mark. Note that, in this situation, her proper course may be to sail head to wind momentarily to get up and around the mark (see Appeal 70).
- The other "limit" is in rule 18.4 (Gybing in the Zone) which says that if an inside overlapped right-of-way boat must gybe to sail her proper course around the mark, she is required to sail no farther from the mark than needed to sail her proper course until she gybes; i.e., she can't continue on straight past the mark or luff away from the mark if that takes her farther from the mark than necessary to sail her proper course. (For a full discussion, including an exception at a gate mark, see the explanation of rule 18.4 in chapter 9.) This "limit" commonly arises at the windward marks whenever L or S is on the inside and her proper course is to gybe around the mark.

But the bottom line is that an inside right-of-way boat is allowed to swing a bit wider and then cut closer around the mark. The reason is because inside right-of-way boats always have the right to sail their proper course while they remain the right-of-way boat, and outside boats must both keep clear of them and give them mark-room. Setting up to round this way allows boats to make a smooth turn and will get them into the most strategically desirable position (clear air, ability to tack, etc.) as they begin the beat, which will help them get to the next mark as soon as possible (see the definition *Proper Course*).

Note, however, that the moment an inside/right-of-way boat gybes to round the mark and becomes an inside/keep-clear boat, she is only entitled to mark-room; this is the space she needs to sail "to" the mark. It does not include room to sail her proper course; and if she takes more space than she is entitled to, she will not be exonerated by rule 43.1(b) (Exonerated) if she breaks rule 11 (On the Same Tack, Overlapped).

"Can you please explain when rule 18.2(c) would apply?"

Sure. Not overlapped. Rule 18.2(c) says, "When rule 18.2(a) does not apply and the boats are overlapped, the outside boat shall give the inside boat mark-room." One possible scenario is two boats (P and S) approaching a windward mark to be left to port on opposite tacks. S is about two lengths behind the starboard-tack layline; P is close to the port-tack layline. When S nears the port-tack layline she tacks. When she passes head to wind she is within the zone. Rule 18.3 (Tacking in the Zone) doesn't apply because no boat has passed head to wind from port to starboard tack. S completes her tack clear ahead

Rule 18.2(a) doesn't apply because the term *overlap* doesn't apply between two boats sailing upwind in the zone of a windward mark (see the definition *Clear Astern* and *Clear Ahead; Overlap*). Therefore, rule 18.2(c) applies. Note that if S were unable to give P mark-room from the moment the overlap began, rule 18.2(c) would not apply (see rule 18.2(d)). Or in a similar approach, rule 18.2(c) would apply if when S completed her tack she is overlapped to leeward of P.

A similar situation is when boats are approaching a starboard-hand windward mark on opposite tacks, and the starboard-tack boat (S) tacks in the zone. Rule 18.3 (Tacking in the Zone) does not apply because the mark is not being left to port (see the discussion of rule 18.3). If a port-tack boat (P) becomes overlapped with S from clear astern, she is entitled to mark-room under rule 18.2(c) unless S is physically unable to give her mark-room, in which case rule 18.2(c) does not apply and P is not entitled to mark-room.