

**RULE 23 — INTERFERING WITH ANOTHER BOAT**

Rule 23 states two situations in which a boat cannot interfere with other boats.

**RULE 23.1**

**If reasonably possible, a boat not *racing* shall not interfere with a boat that is *racing*.**

Rule 23.1 makes it clear that before you begin *racing* and once you are no longer *racing*, you cannot interfere with boats that are *racing*. “Interfere” means that you have adversely affected a boat’s forward progress or maneuverability. Remember, boats begin “racing” at their preparatory signal. The principle of the rule is that a boat that is not *racing* should not adversely affect a boat that is *racing*.

Note that any “interference” will potentially break this rule. Particularly after *finishing*, boats need to be very careful where they sail so that their wind-shadow and physical presence do not hurt boats still *racing*. However, the rule’s opening phrase (“If reasonably possible...”) means that boats do not need to go to unreasonable measures to avoid interfering. If they are careful, they should have no problems.

Remember, the preamble to Part 2 says, “*a boat not racing shall not be penalized for breaking one of these rules...except rule 23.1.*” Rule 44.1 (Taking a Penalty) says, “*A boat may take a Two-Turns Penalty when she may have broken one or more rules of Part 2 in an incident while racing* (emphasis added).” Therefore, if you break rule 23.1 you cannot take a Two-Turns Penalty. You can be protested and penalized under rule 60.5(c) (Protest Decisions). Note, rule 60.5(c) says “*If a boat has broken a rule when not racing, her penalty shall apply to the race sailed nearest in time to that of the incident.*” (See Appeal 16.)

**RULE 23.2**

**If reasonably possible, a boat shall not interfere with a boat that is taking a penalty, sailing on another leg or subject to rule 21.1. However, after the starting signal this rule does not apply when the boat is sailing her *proper course*.**

Rule 23.2 is intended to provide some protection to boats while they are returning to *start* or taking penalties, and to try to stop boats from interfering with a competitor who is a leg or more ahead of them. If, after the starting signal, you are sailing your *proper course* and you interfere with a boat that is OCS and returning to start, taking a penalty or sailing on another leg, you do not break this rule. But, if you are not sailing your *proper course* and interfere with them, you break this rule. Note that before the starting signal you can never interfere with a boat taking a penalty.

It can happen that a boat is OCS (did not *start*) or has not rounded a required *mark* without being aware of that fact. That raises the question “what leg is that boat on?” Case 126 answers this by saying “For the purpose of determining whether rule 23.2 applies to an incident, a boat is sailing on the leg which is consistent with the course she is sailing before the incident and with her reasons for sailing that course. L had not started, but she was unaware that she had made that error. Therefore, L was sailing on the leg of the course to the leeward mark. Clearly W was on the same leg. Therefore, when L luffed W, rule 23.2 did not apply between them.” The answer is the same if a boat has inadvertently not rounded a required offset *mark*.