

# Performance Racing Tactics

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## Chapter 5: Rules at Starts

### 5.1 Luffing at Starts

### 5.2 Barging

### 5.3 Other Starting Rules

#### Chapter 5: Starting Rules

Starting Rules are a mix of the regular racing rules -such as starboard / port, overtaking, and tacking too close - which always apply; and special rules which apply only during starts (Fig. 1). These special rules include barging (Rule 18a), restarting (Rules 20 & 29.1), and the one minute rule (Rule 30.1). The luffing rules are now the same before starts as they are during the race, though in practice some differences remain, as we shall see.

### 5.1 Luffing at Starts

As written, the luffing rules are the same before starts as they are during the race. In practice there are differences, as there is no proper course before the start.

Here is how the luffing rules work (Fig. 2):

The leeward boat has right of way (Rule 11) and may luff as she pleases, limited only by the need to give the windward boat room to keep clear (Rule 16).

If the leeward boat established her overlap from astern, then after the starting signal, she shall not sail above her proper course (Rule 17.1).

If the windward boat established the overlap from astern, or if the leeward boat tacked into the overlap, then she may luff and continue to sail above her proper course regardless of the starting signal. (Why she would want to is another question.)

When you find yourself as a windward boat in a luffing situation, the definition of keep clear requires that you respond promptly to a luff. Head up as far and as fast as possible or necessary. Failure to respond to a luff will likely result in disqualification.

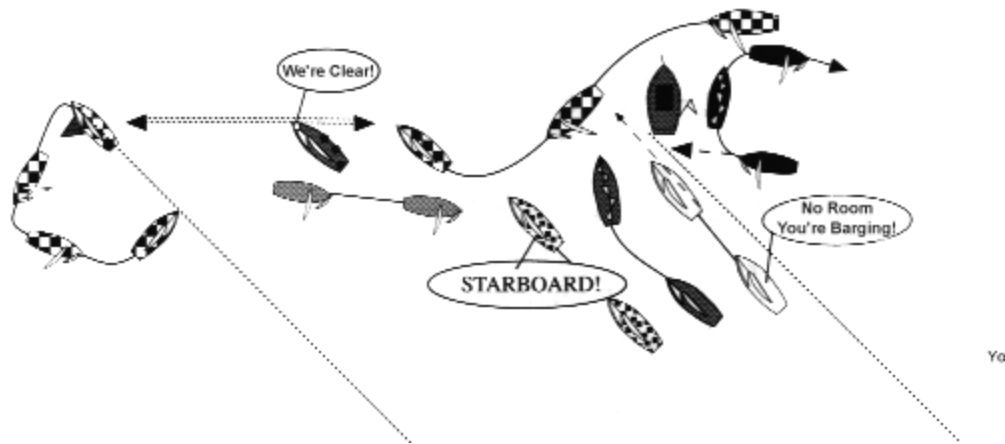


Fig. 1 - Starting Rules are a mix of the regular racing rules and special rules which apply only during starts. These special rules include barging, restarting, and the one minute rule.

A leeward boat may luff to clear the pin as long as she allows the windward boat room to keep clear. Even after the starting signal, a leeward boat may luff above close hauled, as starting is her proper course.

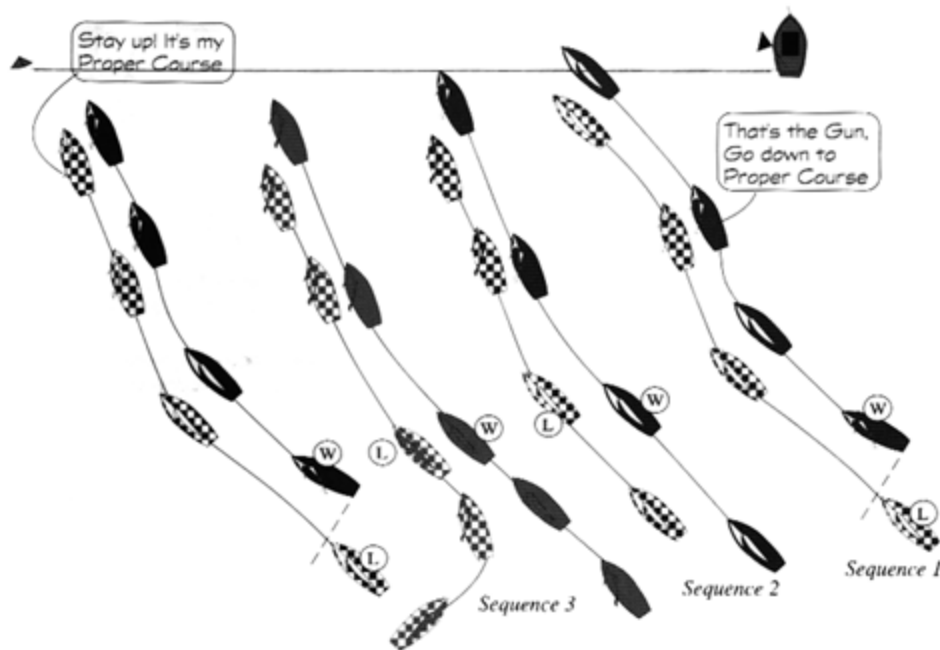
**Definitions:**

The definitions in the US Sailing Rule Book can clarify some common confusion and misunderstanding of the rules.

**Proper Course** is the course a boat would sail to finish as quickly as possible in the absence of the other boats referred to. A boat has no proper course before her starting signal.

One boat **keeps clear** of another if the other can sail her course with no need to take avoiding action and, when overlapped on the same tack, if the leeward boat could change course without immediately making contact with the windward boat.

**Room** is the space a boat needs in the existing conditions while maneuvering promptly in a seamanlike way.



*Fig. 2 Luffing at Starts*

**Sequence 1:** Before the gun L may luff as she please -- provided she gives W room to keep clear. Since L establishes her overlap from astern, she must assume proper course at the gun.

**Sequence 2:** L may luff as high as she likes -- provided she gives W room to keep clear -- before and after the gun.

**Sequence 3:** After tacking into the overlap, L may luff as high as she likes -- provided she gives W room to keep clear.

**Sequence 4:** As in Sequence 1, after the gun, L is restricted to proper course -- but in this case proper course means pinching up to start.

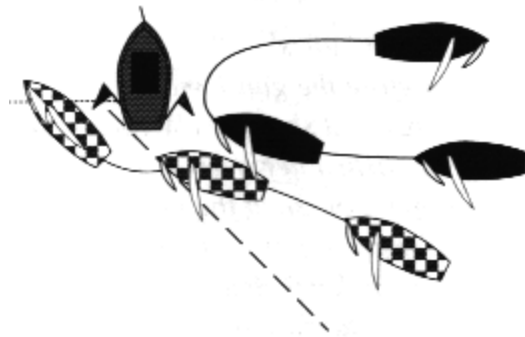
## 5.2 Barging

A leeward boat need not give an inside boat room at the start. The buoy room rules do not apply at starting marks when boats are on the final approach to start (Rule 18.1a). (An inside boat is entitled to room when the fleet simply sailing around before the start.)

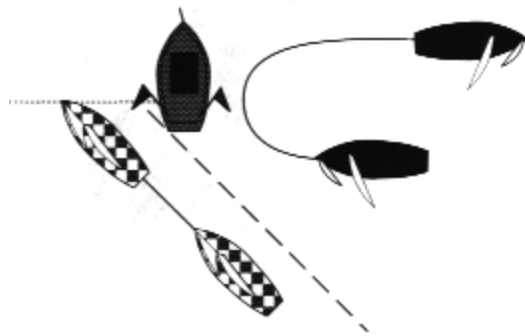
The windward / leeward rule (Rule 11) applies. It is constrained only by the need to leave room for the windward boat to keep clear (Rule 16), If the overlap was established from behind, then the leeward boat is further restricted to not sail above proper course after the starting signal (Rule 17.1).

The anti-barging rule is detailed in the situations presented on this and the facing page.

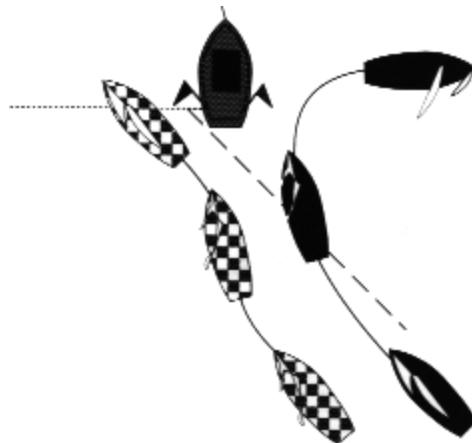
Confused? Here's a tip: Don't barge.



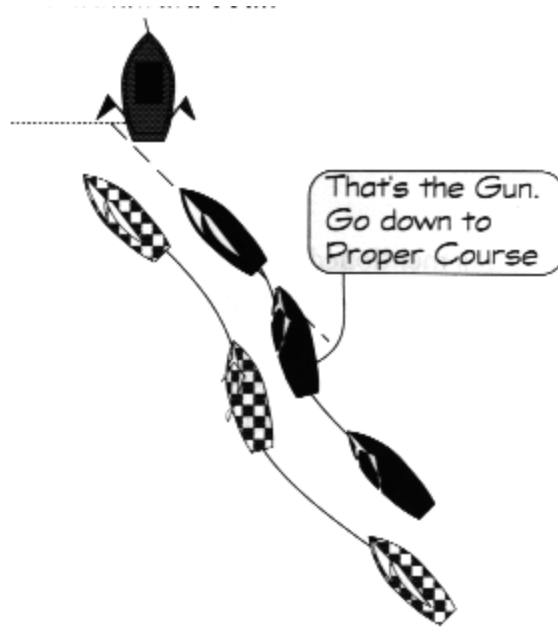
**Situation 1** - A leeward boat sailing close hauled may close out a windward/inside boat at any time.



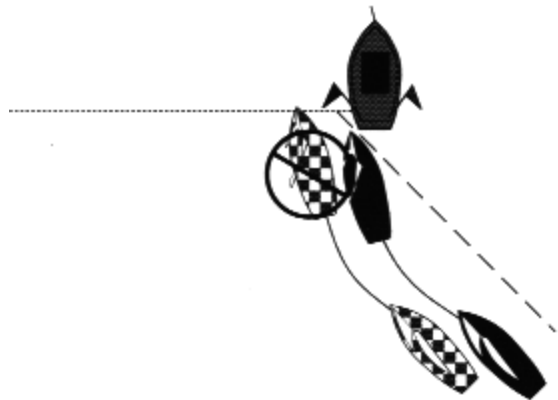
**Situation 2** - A leeward boat sailing a reach may peel off a windward/inside boat at any time.



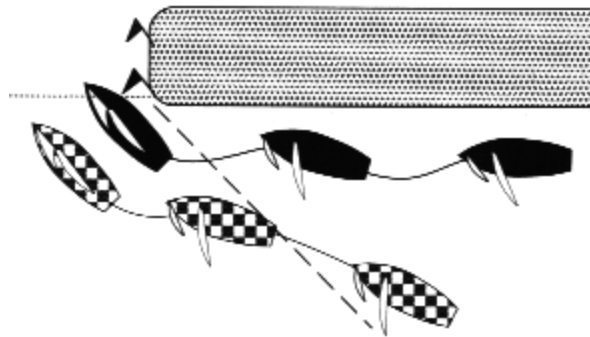
**Situation 3** - A leeward boat may sail above close hauled to close out a windward boat at any time, except....

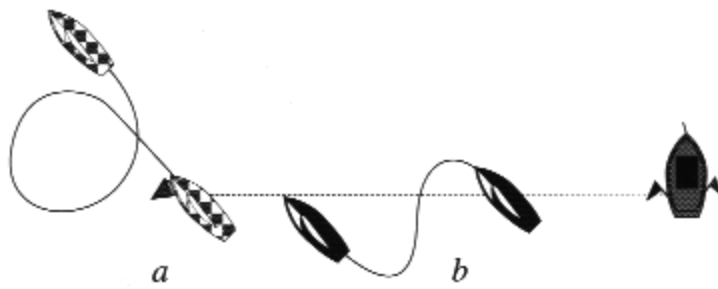


**Situation 4** - ... *if the overlap was established from behind then after the starting signal a leeward boat may NOT sail above close hauled to close out a windward boat.*



**Situation 5** - When a leeward boat changes course she must leave the windward boat room to keep clear.





**Situation 6 -**  
When the starting mark is not surrounded by navigable water, then the buoy room rules apply and the inside boat gets room.

### 5.3 Other

### Starting Rules

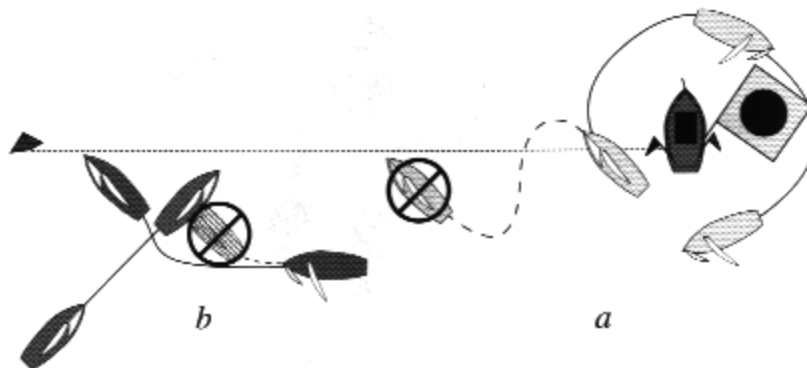
If you hit a starting mark you may exonerate yourself by doing an immediate 360° turn (Rule 31, Fig. 3a).

*Fig. 3a - If you hit a starting mark, you must do a 360 degree turn.*

*Fig. 3b - If you are over early, you must restart.*

A boat which is over early must restart by returning to the proper side of the line (Rule 29.1). The Race Committee is not required to call you back ~ you must judge for yourself whether or not you have started properly. While returning to restart, you must stay clear of those who have started properly (Rule 20, Fig. 3b).

The one minute rule is in effect when code flag "I" is displayed (a yellow flag with a black "eye"). You may not cross the line from the wrong direction during the last minute prior to the start or after the start. A dip start or dip restart is not allowed. You must clear yourself by sailing around the end of the line (Rule 30.1, Fig. 4a).



*Fig 4a - If the "I" flag is flying, then you may not cross the line from the wrong direction during the last minute prior to the start or after the start. You must*

*clear yourself by sailing around the end of the line.*

*Fig 4b. - When changing course, a starboard-tack boat must give a port-tack boat room to keep clear.*

As mentioned above, the starboard/port, overtaking, and tacking-too-close rules apply during starts just as they do on the course. In starboard/port (Rule 4) situations the starboard boat may do as she pleases, constrained only by the need to leave port a way to keep clear (Rule 16, Fig. 4b).

The starting rules are intended to bring order to a crowded starting line. They are fairly effective, at least for upwind starts. Offwind starts create a whole new set of tactical concerns and rules dilemmas, as we will see in the next chapter.