

Racing Rules of Sailing: Mark-Room

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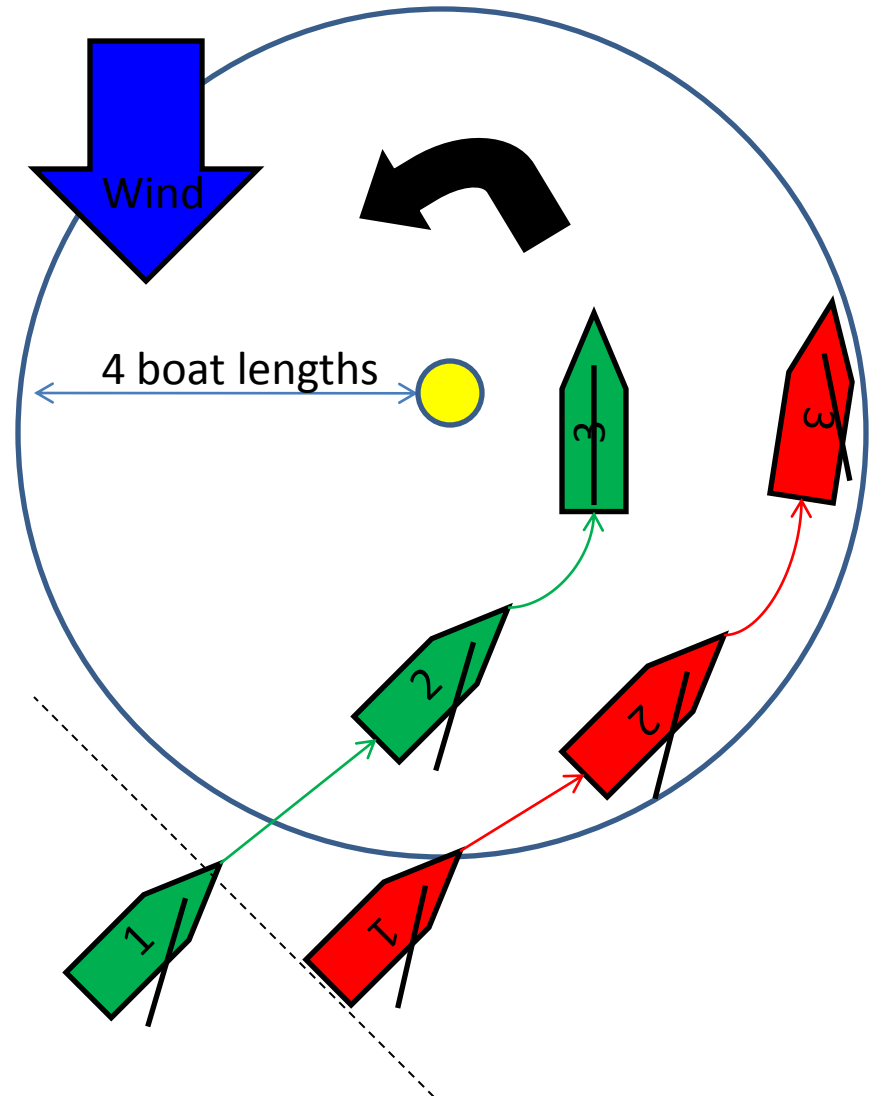
Mark-Room Definition

- MarkRoom = Room for a boat to sail to the mark, and then room to sail her proper course while at the mark. However, mark-room does not include room to tack unless the boat is overlapped to windward and on the inside of the boat required to give mark-room. (Official Definition)

Windward Mark Case I

Windward mark, boats on same tack, and overlapped at the zone

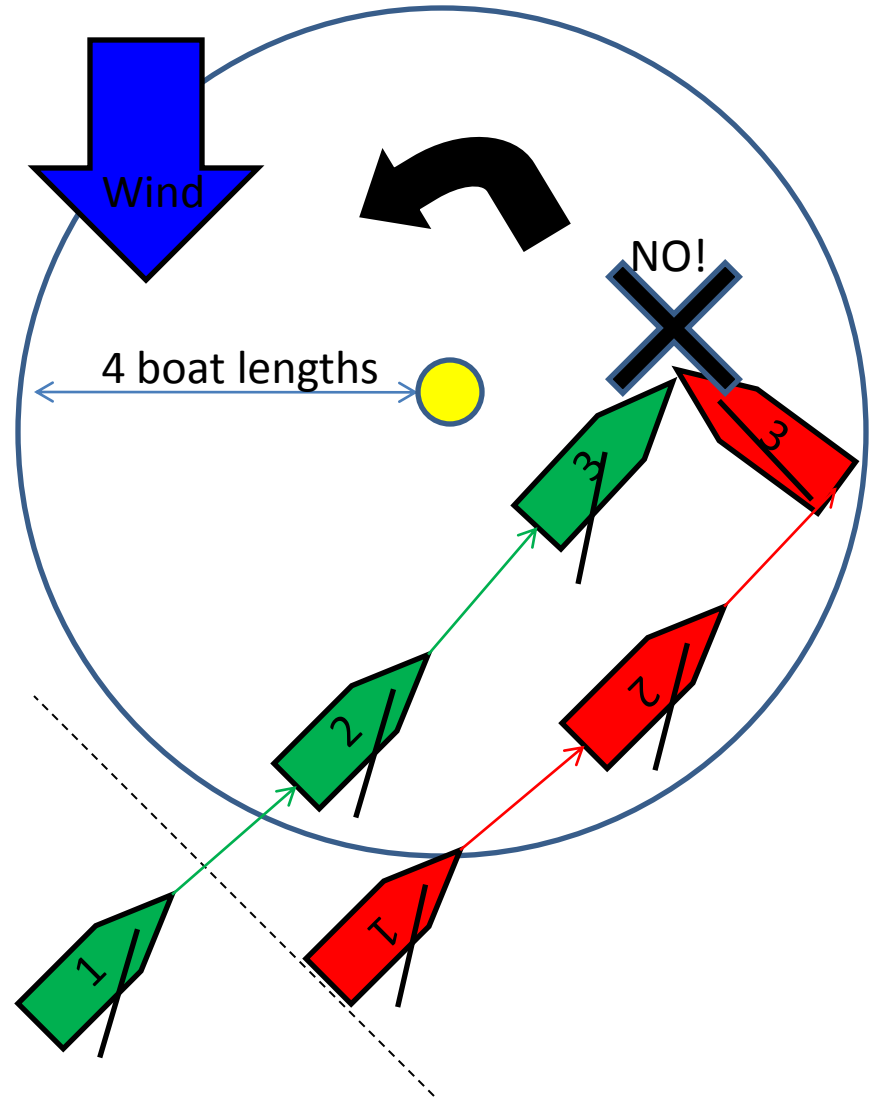
- Green establishes overlap when first boat reaches zone (Position 1) and Red must give “Mark-Room” to Green – RRS Rule 18.2(b).
 - MarkRoom = Room for a boat to sail to the mark, and then room to sail her proper course while at the mark. However, mark-room does not include room to tack unless the boat is overlapped to windward and on the inside of the boat required to give mark-room. (Official Definition)
- Green is the overlapped windward boat and gets room to tack as she rounds (as part of Mark-Room).
- Even if the overlap gets broken (if Red pulls ahead), Green still gets Mark-Room. If Red pulls so far ahead that she can round ahead of Green without getting in Green’s way, that is OK.
- **Red usually must wait for Green to tack** before tacking herself to avoid hitting Green.
- Note Green only gets Mark-Room and nothing more, as Red is still the leeward right-of-way boat. If Red thinks Green has taken “too much” room, Red can protest but must not hit or tack into Green. Red must “take her medicine” and sail the outside course with plenty of space for Green.
- **This could be a finish mark and apply the same (but not a start mark).**



Windward Mark Case II

Windward mark, boats on same tack, clear ahead at the zone

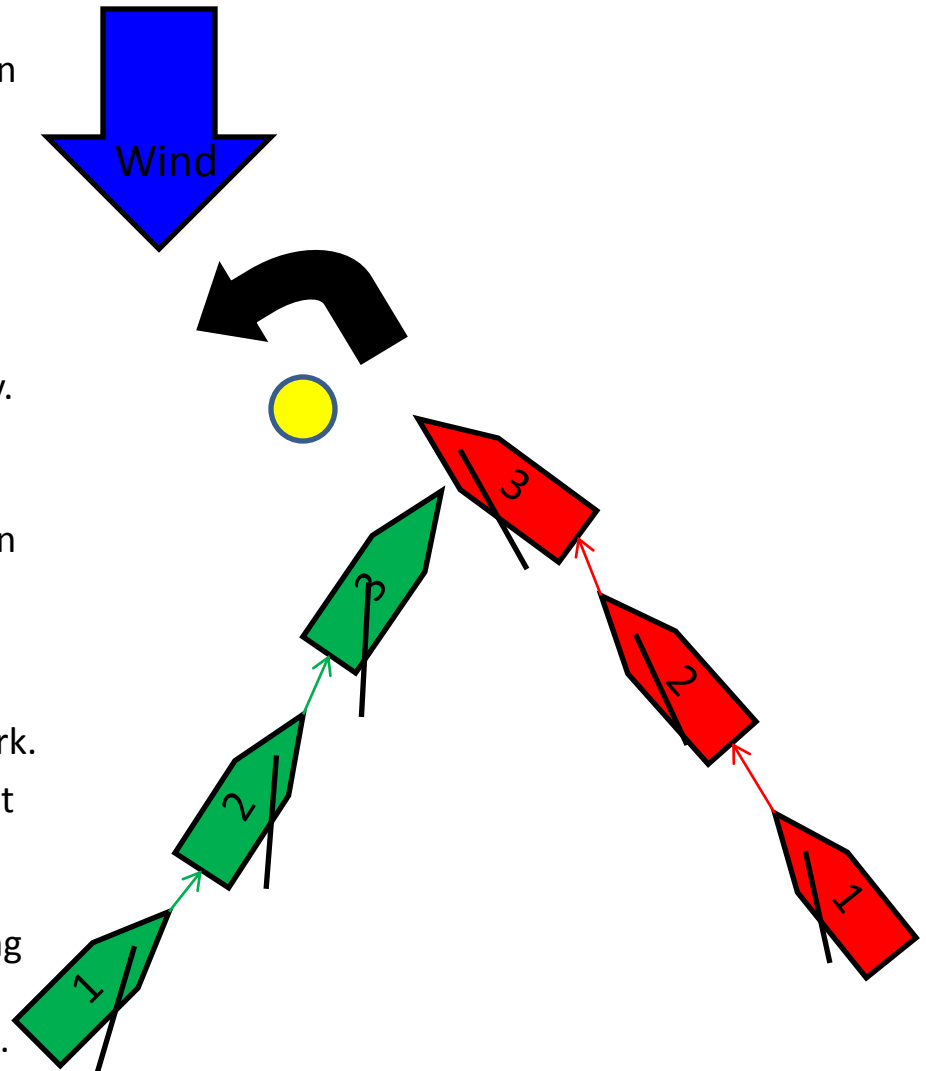
- Red is “Clear Ahead” when she reaches the zone (Position 1) and Green must give “Mark-Room” to Red – Rule 18.2(b)
 - MarkRoom = Room for a boat to sail to the mark, and then room to sail her proper course while at the mark. However, mark-room does not include room to tack unless the boat is overlapped to windward and on the inside of the boat required to give mark-room. (Official Definition)
- Since Red is NOT the overlapped windward boat **she is not entitled to room to tack** as she rounds. Only if Red can pull off the tack sufficiently ahead of Green so as to allow Green the time and space to keep clear may she tack onto starboard here.
- Red may try to sail to the mark from (1) (pinch and even luff) and can try to push Green to the wrong side of the mark if she can.
- Green is taking a risk sneaking in here. Safer for Green to slow and pull in behind Red if you think Red may be far enough ahead to tack onto starboard in time or able to head to the mark (pinch) and squeeze you out.
- As shown with Green so close to Red and Red unable to sail to the mark, Red would need to wait for Green to tack before she tacks. You want to approach the mark on the lay line to take advantage of “Mark-Room”



Windward Mark Case III

Windward mark, boats on opposite tack

- Mark Room does not apply in several situations according to Rule 18.1.
- One such common situation is between boats on **opposite tacks** on a beat to windward –Rule 18.1(a).
- Because the boats are on **opposite tacks** here approaching the zone, it is like the mark is not there and Rule 10 (On Opposite Tacks) applies.
- As the starboard-tack boat, Red has right-of way. Green must keep clear.
- There is a dangerous place for Green if a long parade of starboard tack boats is approaching on the lay line behind Red.
- Green must wait for an opening in the line of starboard boats and has no rights when tacking onto starboard to get in line or to round the mark.
- If Green tacks in the zone to get in line, she must not make any approaching starboard tack boat head higher than close hauled to avoid her and must give mark room to any of these non-tacking starboard boats mark room if they get an inside overlap at any time before the mark – Rule 18.3.

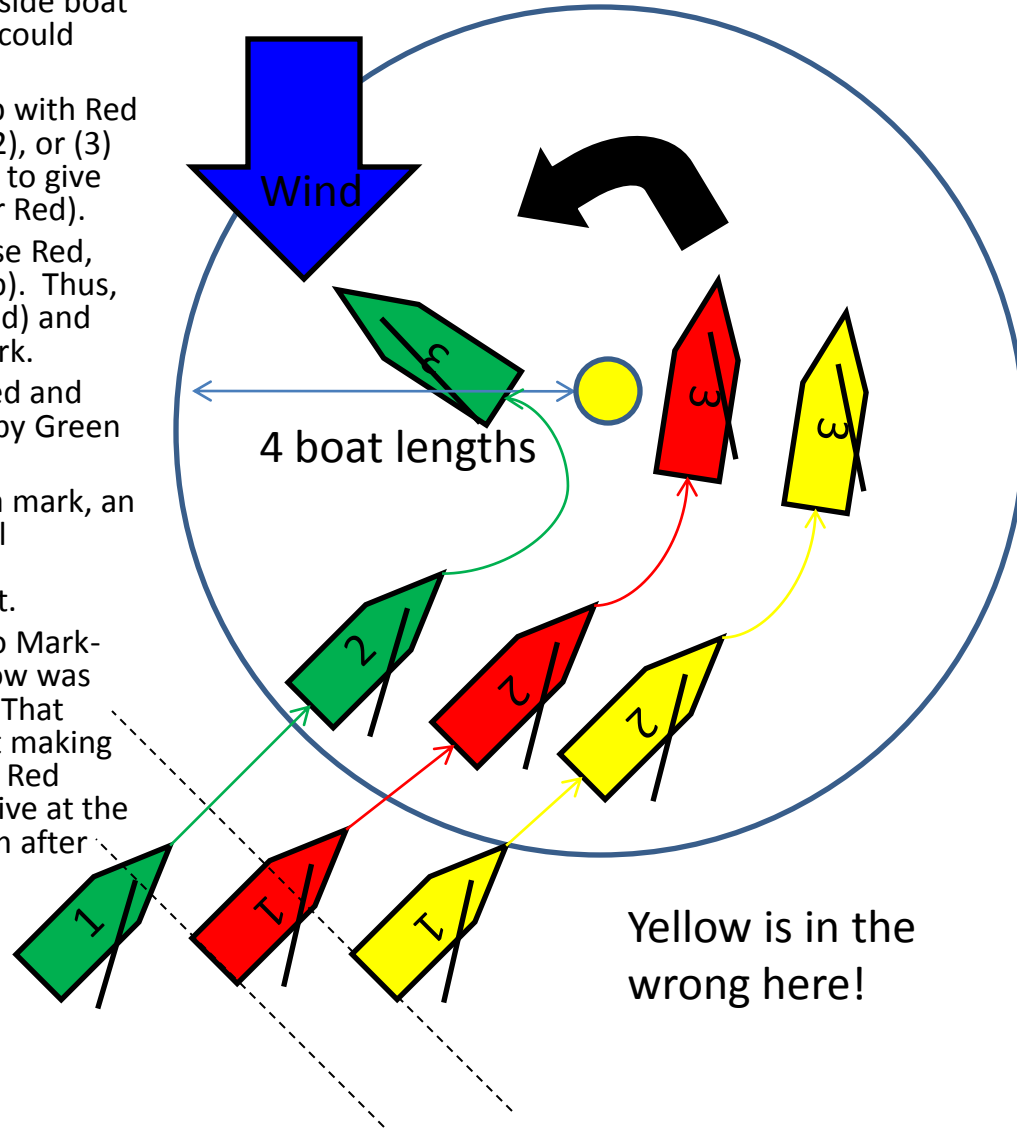


Windward Mark Case IV

No room to give!

- According to Rule 18.2(e), if an inside boat creates an overlap from clear astern and the outside boat has been unable to give Mark-Room **from the time the overlap began**, the outside boat is not required to give it. Note the overlap mentioned could begin well before the zone.
- In our example, assume that Green created the overlap with Red just before Position (1). Red cannot give room at (1), (2), or (3) because Yellow is in the way. Thus, Red is not required to give room in this case (unless Yellow were to make room for Red).
- However, Green and Yellow are also overlapped because Red, between them, overlaps both (see definition of overlap). Thus, Yellow is required to give Mark-Room to Green (and Red) and Yellow can give room by heading off away from the mark.
- Thus, if yellow does not give enough room for BOTH Red and Green, Yellow can be successfully protested (an unhappy Green will probably follow through on that).
- Thus, when a cluster of overlapped boats approaches a mark, an outside boat usually **MUST** provide enough room for all overlapped inside boats. The **outermost** boat must be especially careful and will likely take the fall in a protest.
- Note that Red would not be off the hook with regard to Mark-Room to Green if Green's overlap occurred before Yellow was blocking Red in, even if that was well before the zone. That would be an example of where Red might want to start making Mark-Room, if Red can, well before the zone. This way Red would be sure to avoid getting stuck with no room to give at the zone when **not** exonerated by 18.2(e) if there was room after the overlap with Green and before the zone.

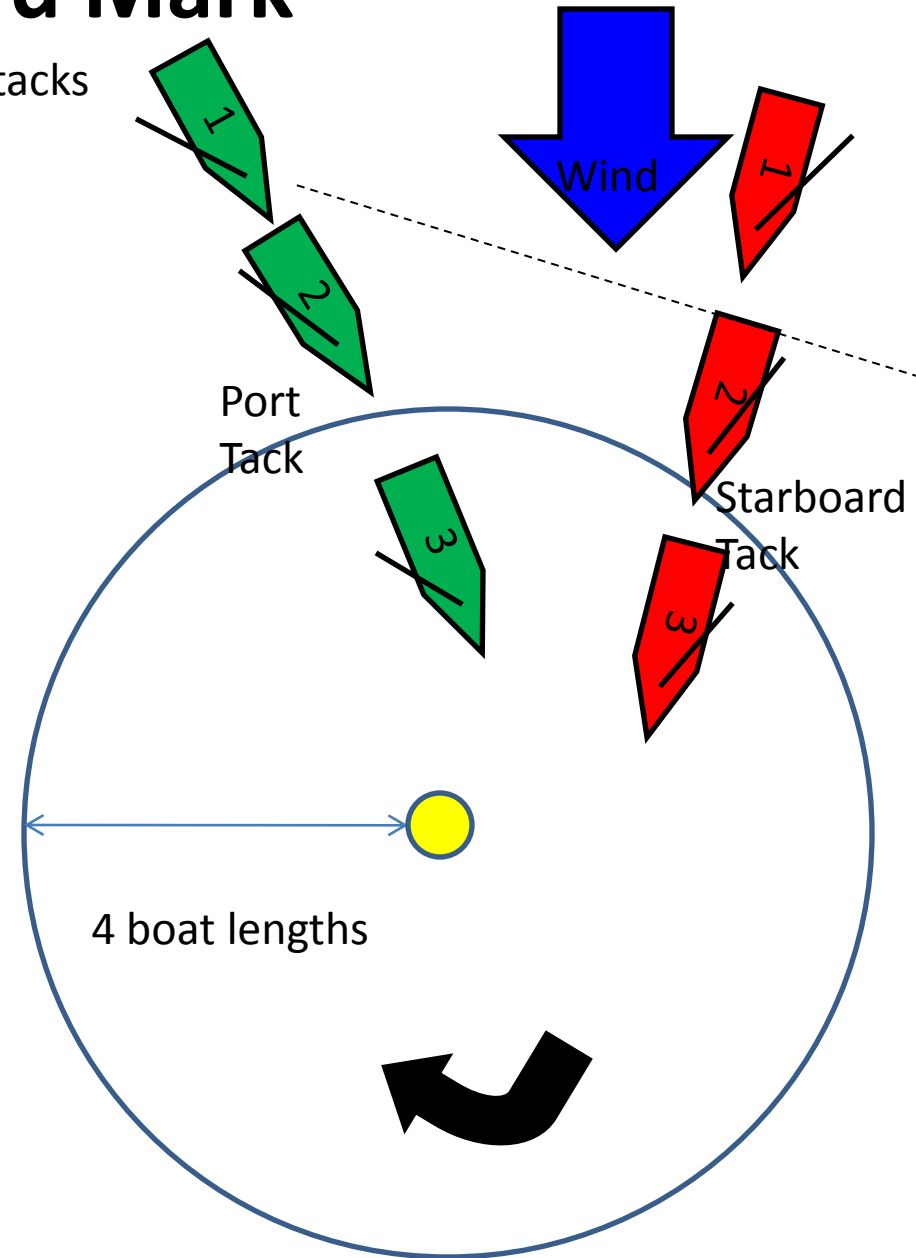
Try not to be the outermost boat! If you are, be a good sport and take your medicine and give the prescribed room to everyone inside! **Don't create a pile-up.** Keep the respect of your fellow sailors and make it up on the next leg.



Leeward Mark

Opposite tacks

- Even though the boats are on opposite tacks here, **Mark-Room applies** because it is a **leeward mark** (they are not on a beat to windward and no one's proper course is to tack at the mark) – Rule 18.1, 18.2.
- This could be a finish mark and apply the same (but not a start mark).
- Green is overlapped when the first boat (Red) enters the zone (at Position 2).
- Red (even though on starboard) must give Green (on Port) Mark-Room here – Rule 18.2(b). Green has the right to room to gybe around the mark sailing her proper course.
- Green must sail no farther from the mark than needed to sail her proper course – Rule 18.4 (does not apply for Gate mark). Proper course is her best course if Red were not there. Note Red is still the right-of-way boat, but with an obligation to provide Mark-Room and nothing more.
- After leaving the mark astern, Red will be leeward retain the right-of-way boat.



Other Mark-Room Facts

- Mark-Room **does not** apply to boats on opposite tacks at a windward mark.
- Mark-Room **does** apply even to boats on opposite tacks at a leeward (downwind) mark.
- Mark -Room stops applying if EITHER boat passes head to wind before the mark.
- Mark-Room **does not apply at a starting mark**. Trying to squeeze in as the windward boat as if you had mark room is referred to as barging. **DO NOT BARGE!**
 - Yes, this makes start line tactics very interesting for those who play by the rules! Leeward boats can push windward boats over the line early or to the wrong side of a start mark (assuming the windward boats keep clear and don't barge). On the other hand windward boats tend to steal the air from leeward boats and may have the most favored position at the line if they don't get pushed over – this makes it interesting!
 - If you barge and get away with it, you can get the favored air & the position unfairly. The leeward boat's only defense is to try to push windward (potentially barging) boat over the line early or to the wrong side of the mark. If the windward boat jams in between the mark and the leeward boat (barging), that is a ridiculously unfair advantage if not protested.
 - If you are windward and at the line too early, a leeward boat can push you over early by coming up under you and heading up (since they are the right of way boat – Rule 11). If the windward boat does not come up (and cross the line early) and keeps reaching down the line so the leeward boat hits them, this is also a kind of barging on the windward boat's part.
 - Windward boats must yield to leeward boats, even if that means they go to the wrong side of the start mark or go over the line early. The trick is to get to the line so that you don't have a leeward boat on your side that can push you over early.

Other Mark-Room Facts

- Mark-Room **does apply** at finish marks. This is sometimes forgotten in the heat of the critical finishing moments.
- Note that Mark Room does not totally negate the other right of way rules (they work simultaneously).
 - You may be the right-of-way boat but need to give mark room to someone else. For example, perhaps you are the right-of-way leeward and you need to give Mark-Room to a windward boat. In that case you do not need to give up any more than Mark-Room prescribes to that windward boat. That is, don't let that boat take an extra wide tactical rounding without protest.
 - If you are the right-of-way boat with luffing rights (the right to sail above your proper course) and do not owe mark room to anyone, you may sail past the mark (preventing a windward boat from rounding), even if it causes great strife to other boat. This is sometimes done to gain tactical advantage. However, not everyone is expecting this move, so a verbal warning is recommended.
 - Note: you have “luffing” rights if you are overlapped with and leeward of another boat **and** the overlap was created by the other boat coming from clear astern (overtaking you from behind). If you are the leeward boat passing a windward boat, you have NO luffing rights and must sail a proper course. Think of “luffing rights” as a purely **defensive** weapon that may only be used to defend against a passing windward boat. It may not be used offensively when you are passing a windward boat.
 - If you are not the right of way boat but are entitled to Mark-Room, you only get room to sail to the mark, and then room to sail your proper course while at the mark – and nothing more (as the definition of Mark Room prescribes).