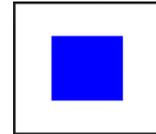




Shorten Course – How to Finish correctly



Two weekends ago, our Saturday racing for Div 1 & 2 finished up early under the RRS shorten course procedure due to a very big weather front approaching. I have had several people ask me since then how they should have finished - as they had been scored DNF and were subsequently told they did not Finish correctly.

So I thought I'd put this document together to explain how to correctly Finish under RRS Shorten Course procedure on any racetrack anywhere and why - and also explain how a boat should have finished on this day.

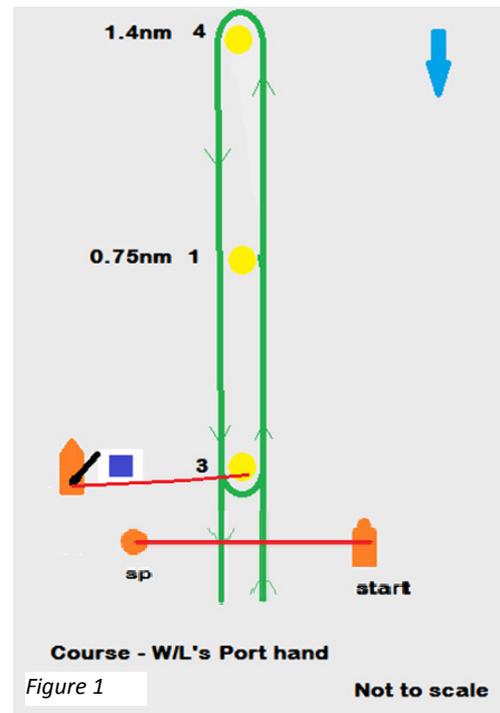
Committee boat position for Shorten Course.

Most days, a Committee Vessel involved in shortening course will try and position itself adjacent to the mark that will be used to shorten so that boats would seemingly 'keep sailing on their normal course direction' but actually Finish in the process of doing so (Figure 1).

It should be noted that for Shorten course, the Committee vessel displaying Flag S actually has no obligation by the RRS to be in the position shown in Figure 1.

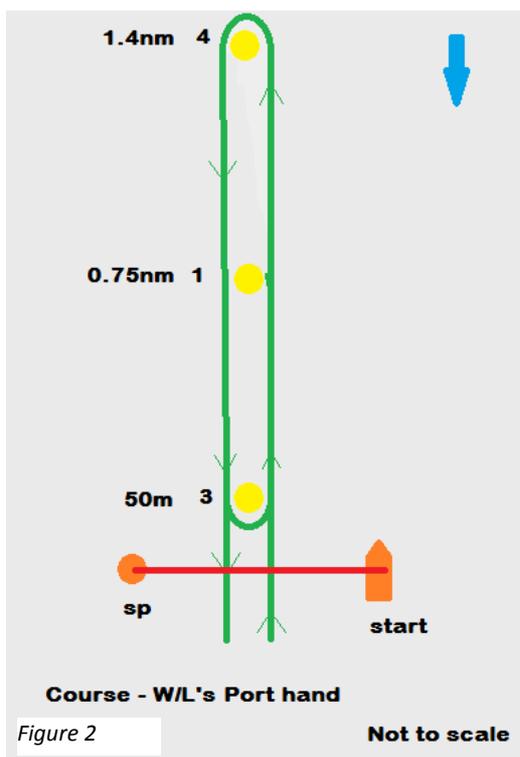
As you will see, her position anywhere adjacent to a rounding mark whilst flag S is displayed will create a new Finish line utilising this mark.

Not understanding the last two paragraphs completely is probably why some boats have come unstuck on race day.



Race Day.

Here is a quick look at the racetrack setup for the day in question.



- Breeze 345 degrees.
- Course 1 was used and as there were no FF's on the water, Mark 2 (wing) was not layed.
- Div 1 & 2 boats were performing Windward Leewards and each division had various laps to complete around Marks 1, 4 & 3.

The dirty weather started to close in so the Race Officer (RO) diligently decided to Shorten Course due to the foul weather (provisioned for under RRS 32.1a).

Retriever (start in Figure 2) suffered a significant mechanical failure (that would later see her cut her anchor chain and send it to the bottom to free herself) and therefore could not move to the other side of Mark 3 as she might typically do.

Her position therefore remained unchanged from Figure 2 for the implementation of the Shorten Course procedure.

As boats approached Mark 3, the RO correctly raised Flag S and made two sound signals in accordance with RRS 32.2(a).

Several boats then rounded Mark 3 to Port to the Finish as if continuing to race around the bottom mark. (Known as a hook finish) Others sailed straight through the line between the boat and the mark to Finish.

So which is right?

Here's what actually happens with regard to the RRS:

- When Flag S is flown adjacent to Mark 3, Mark 3 is immediately no longer a mark of the course but becomes the Finish mark. (32.2a)
- RRS 32.2a also declares that 'boats must Finish between this mark and the Committee vessel displaying Flag S'.
- The RRS definition for 'Finish' determines that a boat must Finish from course side - and since Mark 3 is no longer a mark of the course, 'course side' can only be from the direction of either Mark 1 or 4.
- The RRS Finish definition cannot be modified by the Sailing Instructions.

And therefore Figure 3 shows how boats needed to Finish.

Notes:

Boats must not round Mark 3 to Finish - even though you might consider doing so allows them to sail 'between the mark and Committee vessel' according to RRS32.2a.

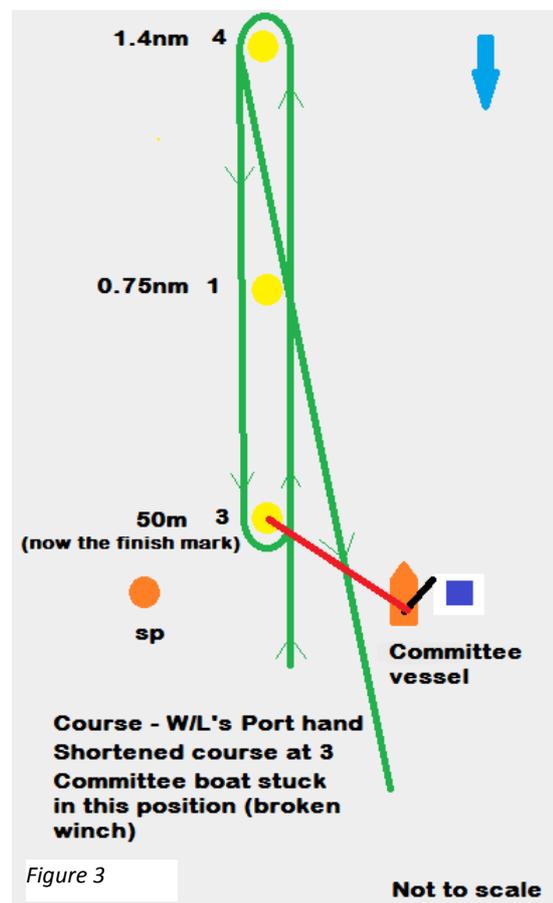
Why? Because Flag S has changed the role of Mark 3 to a plain old Finish mark and in doing so determines there are no more marks left to round in the race! It is now nothing more than a Finish Mark forming part of a Finish line.

And this is where the RRS definition 'Finish' kicks in and ties up exactly how we are to cross any Finish line.

In the older versions of the RRS, the definition for Finish used the expression '.....finish through the line from the direction of the last mark....'

Nowadays it uses the expression '...from course side' instead..

.....and this in fact means exactly the same thing.



Golden Rule for Shorten Course at a Mark:

Always sail between the vessel displaying code flag S and the mark it is adjacent to from the direction of the last mark ('from the course side') - no matter where the Committee vessel sits, no matter which mark it sits at and no matter what hand course you are sailing.

Stephen Bolton
Race Committee
April 2017