

World Sailing Racing Rules Question and Answer Service

Q&A 2025.002

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Interpretation of the term ‘significant advantage’ in rule 44.1(b)

Situation

In an individual race not part of a series Boat A on port is attempting to cross Boat B on starboard. They are around 5th and 6th place in a twenty boat fleet. Boat B has to take avoiding action to avoid Boat A and capsizes whilst doing so. Boat A takes a two turn penalty as soon as reasonably possible and has dropped to 12th place but is still ahead Boat B who has dropped to around 15th place after righting her boat. There is no damage or injury on either boat.

Question

Has Boat A gained a significant advantage in the race as she is ahead of Boat B after the incident?

Answer

No.

RRS 44.1(b) is applicable only when a boat “gains a significant advantage in the race or series” (emphasis added). Since in this case Boat A has dropped from 5th place before the incident to 12th place after the incident, she has not gained an advantage in the race. And, since there is only one race, Boat A has also not gained an advantage in the series.

If there was more than one race, a boat may gain an advantage in the series despite not gaining an advantage in the individual race. In that case, the effect of the change of positions on the boat’s series scores’ would need to be considered.

Note that this answer is limited to fleet racing which is not umpired under Appendix MR or Appendix UF. These appendices include a further provision allowing an umpire initiated penalty for ‘gaining an advantage despite taking a penalty’ without the need for that advantage to be significant nor for it to be specifically ‘in a race or series’ (MR4.1(c) and UF3.4(a)(3) respectively).