

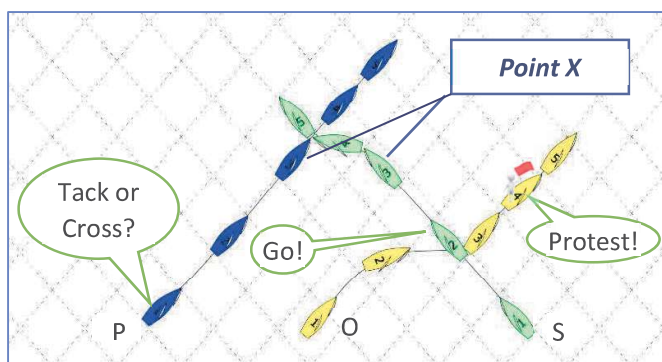
# Tack or Cross – An Age-Old Question

## Introduction

The 'Tack or Cross?' debate is not a new one. Ever since I can remember, the discussion has been avid and heated. Yet, after many years, there seems to be no satisfactory resolution. Consensus is split at all levels.

For those who have not encountered this, I'll briefly explain the scenario.

*Paula and Sally are on a collision course on opposite tacks on a beat. A few boat lengths apart Paula asks the question, "Tack or Cross?". Sally responds by gesturing to P to continue to cross, and hails, "Go!". A few moments later, when it looks like a collision is certain, Sally calmly bears away behind Paula. A third boat, Olive feels that Paula has broken RRS10 and gained an advantage over her. Olive protests.*



There are three main rules to consider with the 'Tack or Cross' scenario.

- RRS 10 and the obligation to 'keep clear'.
- RRS 41 and the consideration whether a boat has received 'outside help'.
- RRS 2 and the consideration whether there has been any clear breach of sportsmanship.

This analysis will take quite an in-depth look at the various rules. For those people who maybe just want a basic takeaway principle of the debate, I'd offer this:

***The "Tack or Cross?" scenario is generally risky for the port boat and probably breaks a rule. Aside from possible miscommunications resulting***

***surprises and potentially dangerous situations, the risk is that both boats could be subject to protest by an aggrieved 3<sup>rd</sup> party.***

## Point X and the Definition of Keep Clear – Rule 10

At the heart of the matter, is the interpretation of the definition of keep clear.

Currently, a boat is defined to be keeping clear...

***... if the right-of-way boat can sail her course with no need to take avoiding action.***

We need to resist the urge to twist the plain text meanings of words, (as is often seen in debates on the matter) to achieve a desired interpretation. As required by the introduction to the RRS, words and terms are used in the sense ordinarily understood in nautical or general use.

However, it is worth noting I shall interpret the meaning of 'course' in the definition of keep clear similar to that clarified in Team Racing Call A2. Something like...

***...the direction in which her bow is pointing. It does not mean her proper course, nor the course she could be expected to be sailing shortly.***

Applying the definition requires correctly recognising the point which Paula fails to keep clear. We will refer to this point as **Point X**.

**Point X** is then:

***...the moment after which, a course change by S is or will be needed to avoid contact. e.g. The moment Paula fails to keep clear.***

By the way, **Point X** is invariably just after **the last moment Paula could keep clear by taking action**. Not exactly the same moment because Paula's obligation to keep clear is broader (and therefore must come earlier) than Sally's requirement to avoid contact.

## Why is Point X important?

It's because prior to **Point X**, RRS 10 cannot be broken. According to the definition of 'keep clear', at any time before **Point X**, Sally does not 'need' to act to avoid contact.