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Rules Specialist Group 2021-2024 Racing Rules of Sailing

Definition of Close Hauled

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Question

Can you clarify for me the definition of close-hauled? Having had discussions with other sailors, some say it is the course your boat sails fastest to windward, others say it is as long as the sails are set and the boat is making some forward movement (lots of pinching).

Answer

There is no definition of close-hauled in the RRS. When there is no special definition the RRS advise that 'Other words and terms are used in the sense ordinarily understood in nautical or general use'. See Terminology in the Introduction.

The common understanding of close-hauled is that it is when a boats sails are trimmed in as tightly as possible, and the boat is sailing as close to the true wind direction as possible.

The Racing Rules of Sailing use 'close-hauled' in phrases 'sailing close-hauled' and 'a close-hauled course'.

To be 'sailing close-hauled' or 'sailing on a close-hauled course' a boat should be sailing an efficient course into the true wind direction but to be on a 'close-hauled course' a boat does not need to have the sails properly set. See World Sailing Case 17¹

¹ CASE 17 Rule 13, While Tacking

A boat is no longer subject to rule 13 when she is on a closehauled course, regardless of her movement through the water or the sheeting of her sails.

Question

Rule 13 applies until the tacking boat 'is on a close-hauled course.' However, the rule does not say whether the boat must be moving when she assumes a close-hauled course. Is it intended that, at the moment rule 13 ceases to apply, the boat must actually be moving through the water on a close-hauled course and not merely be on such a course?

Answer

A boat is no longer subject to rule 13 when she is on a close-hauled course, regardless of her movement through the water or the sheeting of her sails.



**For Australian Sailing Rules Specialist Group
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