

Skipper Certification & Review Board – Safety & Incident Report

Incident Date: July 2026

Vessels: Two club J/24s. **Location:** First upwind mark on a race night

Environmental Conditions: Light wind; light current

Skipper Review Board: September 21, 2026 All six board members in attendance

1. Incident Overview & Rule Violations

- **Incident Summary:** During a Club Race, Boat A approached a crowded windward mark situation on port tack, intending to tack and round the mark. Boat B approached the same mark on starboard tack and hailed "Starboard." Boat A failed to keep clear in a timely manner. Boat B maintained its course and did not take evasive action to avoid the contact as required by Rule 14, which states: the stand-on boat shall avoid contact in the event of the give-way boat does not demonstrate it is keeping clear.
- **Rule 10 (On Opposite Tacks):** As the port-tack boat, Boat A was required to **keep clear** of Boat B on starboard tack. Boat A failed to do so, causing the incident.
- **Rule 14 (Avoiding Contact):** Boat B had the right-of-way but failed to take reasonable action to avoid a collision once it became clear that Boat A was not keeping clear. Because the collision resulted in structural damage, Boat B is in breach of **RRS 14**.

2. Damage, Financial Liability & Allocation

- **Damage Assessment:** The impact pushed Boat B's port stanchion through the deck. Club staff rebuilt the upper and lower deck structures.
- **Cost Breakdown:** **\$1,200** (Labor) + **\$800** (Replacement Stanchion Parts) = **\$2,000 Total**.
- **Board Decision on Liability:** In accordance with the breaches of RRS 10 and RRS 14, the Board rules that both skippers share financial responsibility.
 - **Boat A (Port Tack): 80% (\$1,600)** for failing to keep clear as the give-way vessel.
 - **Boat B (Starboard Tack): 20% (\$400)** for failing to take mitigating action to avoid a damaging collision when it was reasonably possible to do so.

3. Fleet Seamanship Takeaways

- **Proactive Trajectory Planning:** Port-tack boats approaching a crowded windward mark must hail or identify starboard-tack laylines early. If a cross is not guaranteed, the port boat must hail their intent to tack early or duck well before entering the zone.
- **The "Right of Way" is Not a Shield:** Right-of-way vessels are reminded that winning a protest does not justify breaking a boat. If a collision is imminent, the right-of-way boat **must** alter course to avoid contact and hail "Protest." Hailing "Starboard" is a warning, not a substitute for collision avoidance. If the give-way boat shows no signs of altering course, the right-of-way boat **must** prioritize boat preservation **over** racing line.