

Tips

For Avoiding Collisions In A-Cat Regattas

This document was compiled by a working group of dedicated A-Cat sailors: Christian Stock, Dominik Peikert, Matthias Dietz (+), Rainer Bohrer.

We dedicate it to our deceased sailing friend Matthias Dietz, whose great fairness should be a role model for us all.

At some regattas in recent years there have been serious collisions between two or more participants. In view of the high risk of injury and the high repair costs, we as a class association, want to do everything we can to avoid collisions in future.

Due to the very high speeds of Open foiling and Classic A-cats, sailors need to be particularly careful and caution is necessary for all sailors when the closing speed of boats can be more than 50 knots (up to 100 km/h)! In this challenging situation, with sometimes very many boats on the regatta course, in addition to essential sailing preparation, an in-depth knowledge of the rules is also very helpful for successful and stress-free participation.

In a boat class as fast-paced as the A-Cat, it is particularly important that all regatta participants observe rule 14: Avoid contact. Nobody should stubbornly insist on their right of way! If at all possible, even with right of way, you must use a last-minute manoeuvre to avoid contact and then call a protest.

In the following, we show some important standard situations in which experience has shown us that collisions occur with particular frequency. We mention RRS rules 10 to 22 of the Racing Rules of Sailing, which are also binding for us. And we give tips on how to avoid crash-intensive situations by sailing with foresight. This summary is naturally not complete, but it will give you a good initial overview in a short space of time.

Waiting before the start

Collision risk: When drifting before the start, sailors often sit on the boat facing backwards, even if they have no right of way, or they are inattentive. This repeatedly leads to collisions with other boats (with or without right of way).

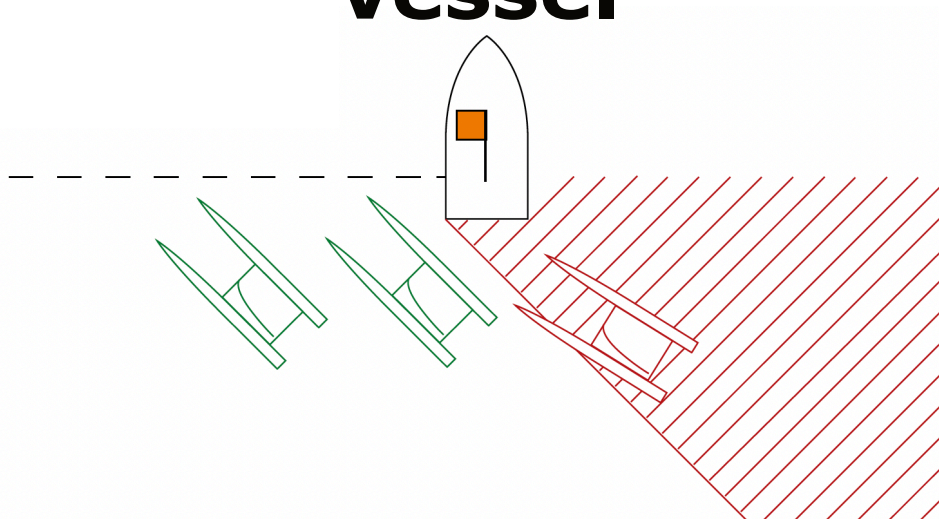
Rules: These rules may be violated: 10, 11, 12, 14, 21, 23

Avoidance: Keep an eye on where other boats are positioned at all times.

When approaching other boats while drifting, pick up speed in good time to be able to change course and take evasive action.

It is advisable to wait with wind from starboard. This way, all boats drift in the same direction and you have the right of way over boats on port.

Starting at the Committee vessel



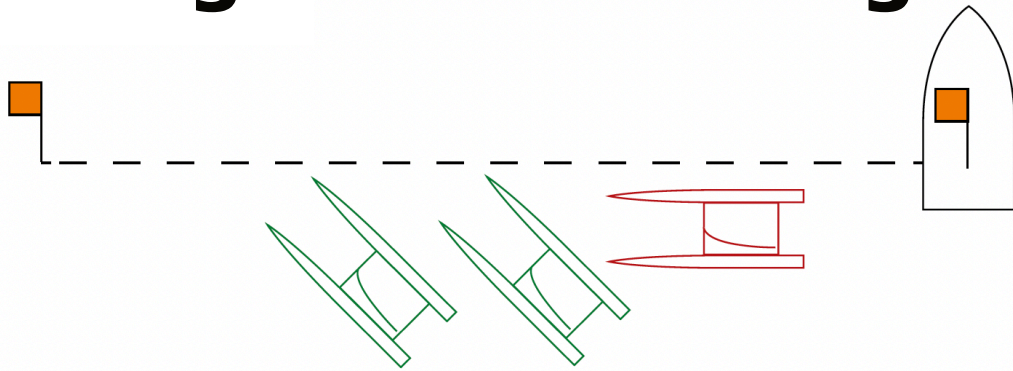
Risk of collision: Some sailors mistakenly assume that there is mark room at the Committee vessel and squeeze in as a windward boat between the Committee vessel and a leeward boat. This often leads to contact with the leeward boat or the Committee vessel.

Rules: Breach of rule 11

Avoidance: Position with foresight.

If there is not a sufficiently large gap at the Committee vessel, slow down in good time by easing sheet or tack away.

Reaching at the starting line

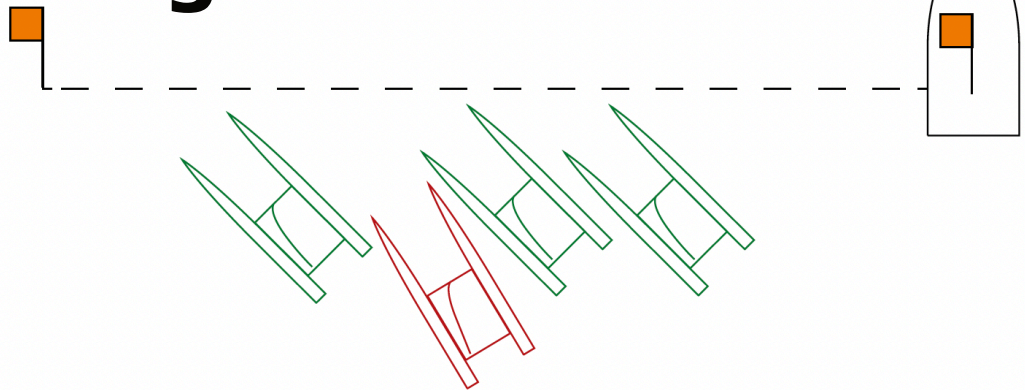


Collision risk: Occasionally, sailors on starboard tack are beam reaching along the starting line. This often results in collisions with leeward boats that have the right of way, especially shortly before the start signal.

Rules: Breach of rule 11

Avoidance: Always give leeward boats enough room. If necessary, you must accept a false start (OCS) in order to keep clear.

At the starting line, pushing in from behind



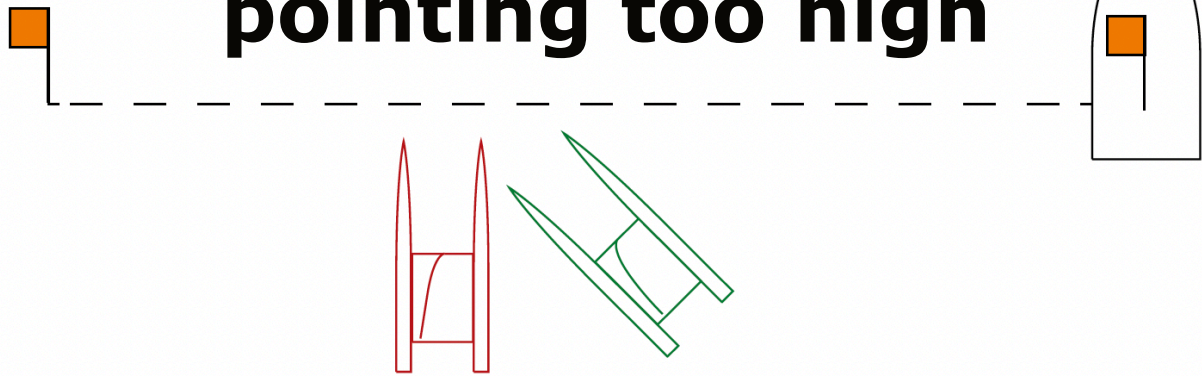
Collision risk: Before the start, it is generally permitted to sail from behind into a sufficiently large gap between a leeward boat and a windward boat.

The windward boat must then keep clear. However, some sailors do not allow the windward boat to keep clear by pushing into gaps that are too narrow or by luffing too suddenly, resulting in collisions. The leeward boat may also be pressurised, resulting in a collision.

Rules: Violation of rules 11, 15 and possibly 12

Avoidance: Do not push into gaps that are too narrow. Do not pressurise windward boats by abruptly luffing. Keep clear of leeward boats.

At the starting line, pointing too high



Collision risk: Some sailors tend to point very high in the last 30 seconds before the start (wind direction below 45 degrees), to create the largest possible gap to the leeward boat. This provokes the great risk of unintentionally tacking or drifting backwards and then colliding with other boats.

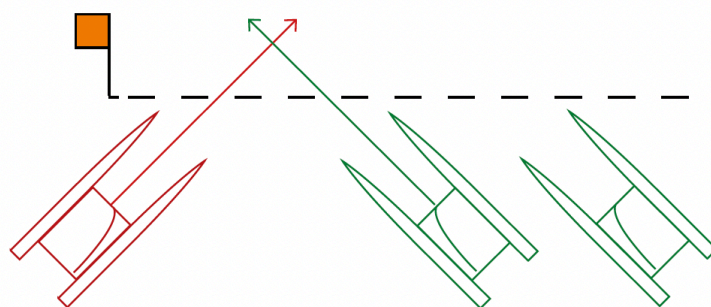
Rules: Breach of rules 10, 14 or 20

Avoidance: When approaching the starting line, do not stand higher than 45 degrees to true wind.

Pull the traveller amidships relatively late, leave the sheet eased and only accelerate a few seconds before the start signal.

Wiggling with the rudder is not very effective with the A-Cat and is not a suitable avoidance strategy.

Starting on port



Collision risk: Sometimes sailors start on port because they hope to gain tactical advantages. However, this provokes a risk of collision with right of way boats (with wind from starboard).

Rules: Violation of rule 10

Avoidance: Starting on port is only possible in a few situations and is reserved for experienced sailors.

If there is an acute risk of collision, either drop behind right-of-way boats in good time, slow down by easing sheet or tack away.

Avoid collisions at all costs

Collision risk: Occasionally, right-of-way boats stubbornly insist on their right of way and even accept collisions. Or they change course at such short notice that boats that have to give way can not keep clear.

Rules: Breach of rule 14 or 16

Avoidance: According to rule 14, right of way boats are also obliged to avoid collisions.

In the event of non-compliance and in the event of damage, they can also be disqualified.

Therefore, if in any doubt, take evasive action in good time ("manoeuvre at the last moment"), then protest the boat that is

Sudden manoeuvres

Collision risk: Often sailors make very sudden manoeuvres such as tacking or jibing, thereby gaining the right of way. However, due to the suddenness of the manoeuvre, boats that are obliged to give way hardly have the chance to manoeuvre and violent crashes occur.

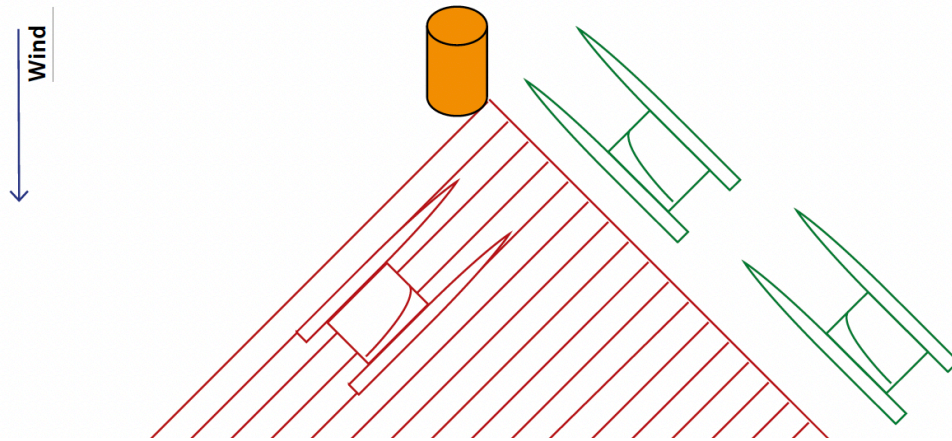
Rules: Breach of rule 16

Avoidance: Plan manoeuvres carefully and let boats that have to give way sufficient time to react.

Due to the high speed and the use of trapeze, the appropriate time to take evasive action is significantly longer than with many other types of boat, depending on the wind conditions.

However, boats that have to give right of way are obliged to react immediately.

At the windward claiming mark room (mark to port)



Risk of collision: Some sailors mistakenly believe that there is mark room for boats on port in the three-length zone at the windward mark, and tack into crowds of boats with right of way.

Even if the tack is successful in front of the boats with right of way: If these boats have to change course to avoid a collision, you are breaking the rules. Serious collisions often occur.

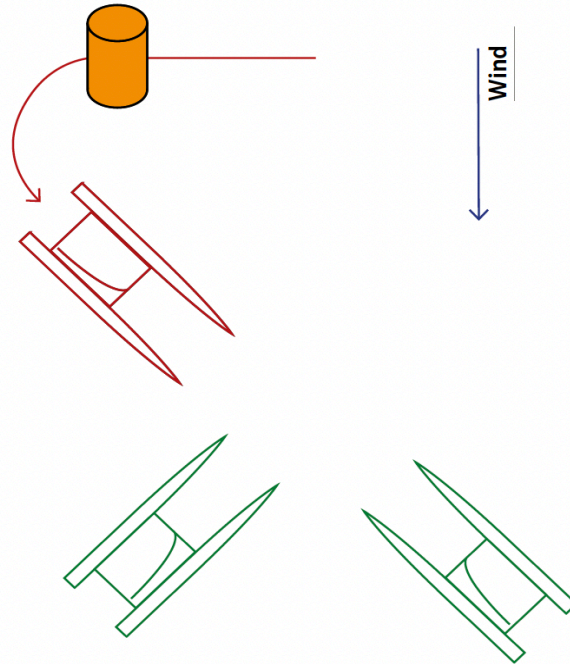
Rules: Breach of rule 10 and possibly 13, 16.

Avoidance: Sail with foresight and caution.

Only tack into sufficiently large gaps! Alternatively, if there is enough space, sail through a gap to windward of the convoy and only tack there.

If necessary, slow down or bear away in good time to tack behind the stern of boats with right of way.

Observe the right of way on the downwind course

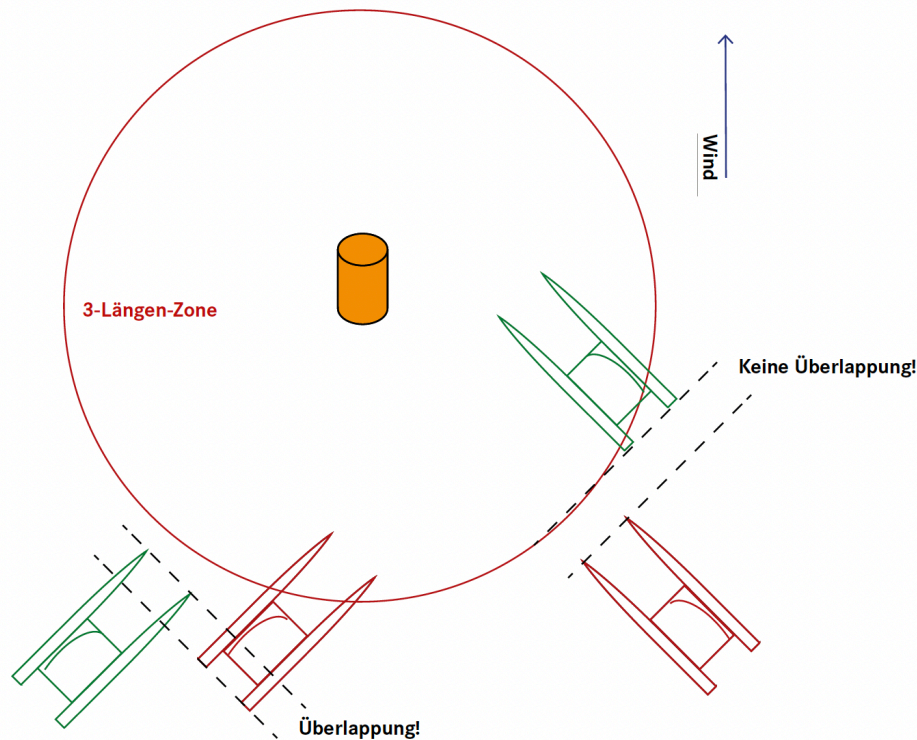


Risk of collision: Sailing on the downwind leg on port and looking to leeward it is easy to forget right of way boats . This can lead to dangerous collisions at high speed and cause major damage.

Rules: Breach of rule 10

Avoidance: On the downwind course, observe the position of the other boats. If necessary, gybe in good time or give way briefly to avoid a collision.

Mark room at leeward marks



Collision risk: When rounding leeward marks, many sailors do not give enough room for the boats on the inside when they reach the three-length zone, despite the existing overlap, and collisions occur.

Rules: Infringement of rule 18

Avoidance: Sufficient room must always be kept from boats on the inside.

If there are several boats on the outside, they must all give space to the inner boats.

The outermost boat has absolutely no right of way.
In case of doubt, you must make a large outside turn.

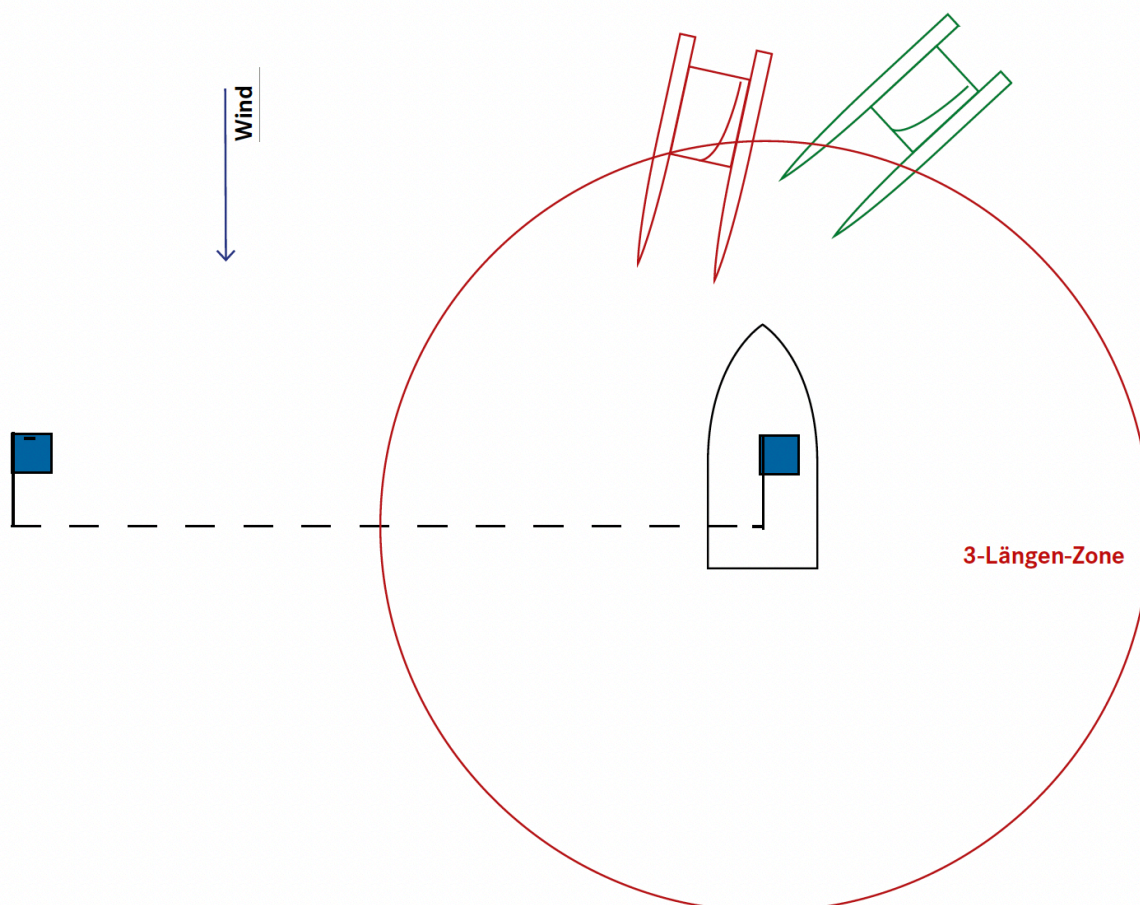
No overlap = no mark room

Collision risk: Boats often push into a crash-intensive inside position at leeward marks, even though there was no overlap with the boat in front when they reached the three-length zone. Or they hit the boat in front from behind. (Whether the wind is coming from starboard or port is irrelevant in both scenarios).

Rules: Infringement of rule 18 and/or 12.

Avoidance: Slow down in good time by easing sheet (if absolutely necessary, you can briefly put your leg in the water to brake) or take an outside curve.

Mark room at finish line marks



Collision risk: When approaching the finish line, some sailors do not let their opponents mark room even after reaching the three-length zone at the boundary markers and despite overlapping. This leads to collisions.

Rules: Breach of rule 18

Avoidance: Unlike at the starting line, rule 18 applies to finish lines.

Therefore, the inside boat must be given mark room at both boundary marks, if there was an overlap when reaching the three-length zone.

Remember - Safe racing is no accident!