



Royal Ocean Racing Club Rating Office

IRC Notice #1 2004 - Headsails and Spinnakers

A problem with compliance with the definitions for headsails and spinnakers has recently come to light. Current IRC Rule 26.3.4, last amended at the beginning of 2001, says:

26.3.4RRS 50.4 shall not apply.

A headsail is defined as a sail tacked down forward of the foremost mast with half width (measured as a headsail) not exceeding 75% of LP. Any other sail set forward of the foremost mast is a spinnaker and shall have half width (measured as a spinnaker) greater than 75% of foot.

This has been amplified by a published interpretation dated 20th November 2002, the substance of which is:

The rule applies in the order it is written. Therefore:

- *If the sail satisfies the definition of a headsail (ie. HHW not exceeding 75% of LP) then it rates as a HEADSAIL.*
- *If the sail does NOT satisfy the definition of a headsail then it rates as a SPINNAKER, and then the SHW must be at least 75% of SF.*

While this IRC rule has been unchanged since 1991 without apparent problem, during that period, the design of asymmetric spinnakers has advanced significantly. They are also now more commonly used as standard heavy airs spinnakers. Recent information from measurers and sailmakers now leads us to conclude that there are a significant number of 'spinnakers' in use which if fully measured in accordance with the above should in practice be rated under IRC as headsails. It is accepted that this is inadvertent and that there has been no attempt to manipulate IRC Rules.

The IRC Technical Committee has therefore reviewed IRC Rule 26.3.4 and concluded that a change will be required for 2005. The proposed (**unconfirmed**) change is:

26.3.4RRS 50.4 shall not apply.

A spinnaker is defined as a sail set forward of the foremost mast with half width (measured as a spinnaker) greater than 75% of foot. Any other sail tacked down forward of the foremost mast is a headsail.

Additionally, in the interests firstly of gathering as much information as possible prior to confirming this change for 2005 and secondly to ensure as much equity as possible for the remainder of this year, **boats carrying sails rated as headsails under the current rule which under the proposed revised rule will be rated as spinnakers are invited to apply through their local Rule Authority for dispensation for those sails to be rated as spinnakers for the remainder of 2004. Dispensations granted will not be back-dated to before the date of application.**

For further information, please contact Mike Urwin at mikeurwin@rorcrating.com or Jenny Howells at jenny@rorcrating.com

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