A black and white photograph of two sailboats on a beach. The sailboats are positioned on the sand, with their masts and spinnakers visible. The background shows a line of trees or bushes under a clear sky.

Commentary on NALSA Rules

—Bob Dill

This is the end of the official rules. The following is some unofficial commentary by Bob Dill on the core rules. Comments are in parenthesis () and sans serif type. When we talk to people about the rules we are often surprised at the misconceptions people have. No matter how long you have been racing, please read the following carefully. Things happen far too fast in these boats to have any question about who has the right-of-way so please learn the rules well. Ask questions if you are confused on any aspect of the rules. If you think my perspective on any of these rules is wrong or have suggestions on how to explain them better please get in touch.

RULE 1. A pilot is responsible for the safe operation of his yacht.

Avoidance of a collision shall take precedence at all times regardless of right-of-way. A yacht should signal for right-of-way in cases of possible collision. (This means that not getting into an accident is more important than exercising your right-of-way. If you have the right-of-way and the other yacht is not yielding, avoid the accident and sort things out later in the protest room. A collision will, at a minimum, end any hopes you have for doing well in a race and often will end the use of the yachts for the rest of the regatta. Potentially, serious injury or even death can result from a collision . . . all very good reasons to avoid tight situations).

RULE 2 Pilots shall attempt to win a race only by fair sailing, skill and superior speed. (The game is “May the best sailor/fastest yacht win”. In general, because of the fast speeds and severe potential consequences of collisions, we use rules to avoid collisions and not to provide tactical advantage. Helping a friend by using the rules to interfere with one of his competitors is not allowed.)

RULE 3 A right-of-way yacht shall not alter course so as to prevent a non-right-of-way yacht from keeping clear. (This is the ‘room and opportunity’ rule. This is to make it easier for the non-right-of-way yacht to avoid you. Leave plenty of room for a non-right-of-way yacht to avoid you. This is one of many ‘fine line’ points. If a collision appears likely then you should attempt to avoid the collision (Rule 1). Good judgment and a thorough understanding of the capabilities and limitations of you and others yachts is needed. For example, if you tack close in front of someone but don’t give them time to avoid hitting you, you are likely to loose any protest that results.

RULE 4 A yacht may not employ any means of propulsion other than the action of the wind on the sails. The pilot may push the yacht to leave the starting line or to return the yacht to wind propulsion when necessary. (Excessive running in light winds may get you disqualified or protested out of a race. If there is not enough wind to sail, the race may get called for lack of wind. Some classes (the Manta classes for example) forbid any running during a race. If at least one yacht is lucky enough to get enough wind to get around the course in the lap time the race is scored. Everyone has lucky and unlucky light wind races. Odds favor everyone having a mix of good and bad luck by the end of the week.)

RULE 5 Pilots shall wear helmets and seat belts when racing. (Bike and kayak helmets are marginal, although they have been allowed in some cases.)

RULE 6.0 When on opposite tacks a Yacht on the left shall keep clear of a yacht on the right. (This rule is different from the rules used for sailing on water or ice. The rule is similar to the automobile road rule for stop sign priority. The general concept is that when boats are converging (sailing at roughly right angles to each other) the boat on the left will yield to the boat on the right. This most often applies when two boats are sailing up wind or down wind on opposite tacks but also applies when boats are on the same tack but one is sailing upwind and the other sailing downwind (rule 6.0 does not address the ‘same tack’ situation this explicitly). By definition a collision results from convergence of two yachts. What is different about

rules 6.0, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 7 is the angle of convergence. 6.0 is designed to avoid approximately right angle ('T-bone') collisions. 6.1 is designed to avoid head on collisions. 6.2 and 6.3 are designed to allow boats that point higher or sail deeper while avoiding side by side collisions. Overtaking (rule 7) is for faster boats passing a slower boat and to avoid collisions from behind.

We sail courses that go both clockwise and counterclockwise depending on the wind direction. On Ivanpah a North wind generally results in a counterclockwise course (marks passed to your left/port side). A south wind generally results in a clockwise course (marks to your right/starboard side). Make sure you round in the right direction. If you round in the wrong direction you risk a nasty collision and you will be disqualified.)

RULE 6.1 Yachts meeting head on are required to bear right. (This rule is intended for yachts that are sailing nearly directly at each other. Passing to the right is similar to how cars pass on North American highways. This commonly occurs when one side of the course has better wind so the upwind boats are sailing in the same area as the downwind yachts. This makes for very high closing speeds. Act early and deliberately so everyone understands what is going on well before you get close.)

RULE 6.2 Yachts on the same tack and sailing upwind, the windward yacht shall keep clear. (The idea behind 6.2 comes from water sailing. If you can point higher, than someone above you, they should get out of your way. Keep in mind that you need to give them room and opportunity to do so and, if you are overtaking, you have to follow rule 7.1. Abrupt heading up (luffing) is not allowed and may be interpreted as not giving room and opportunity. Things happen too fast in this sport to allow some of the abrupt maneuvers that are acceptable on water. Generally, we try to sail a reasonable approximation of a windward/leeward course. Bear in mind, however, this is not always possible. Also, the wind might shift as much as 180 degrees in the middle of a race. As described in the definitions above, the windward mark is defined as the first mark you round and the leeward mark is the last mark rounded before crossing the finish line.)

RULE 6.3 Yachts on the same tack and sailing downwind, the leeward yacht shall keep clear. (6.3 is unique to ice and dirt sailing. It allows the upwind boat to have room to bear off. It is equivalent to RULE 6.2 as the boats are close hauled going down wind. Obviously you need to give the leeward yacht room and opportunity to stay out of your way. If it is windy the yachts are going fast and it is very easy to

get into a spin. Giving everyone a little extra room will reduce the chances of getting tangled up.)

RULE 6.4 A right-of-way yacht shall not carry a non right-of-way yacht away from the proper course to the next mark. (This rule rarely comes into play, but it is intended to prevent one yacht from carrying another boat away from the mark by blocking him. Everyone has different ideas of the optimum tacking angle and when is the proper time to execute a mark rounding. Unless it is taken to extremes it is unlikely that this rule will be called on.)

RULE 7 Rule of special application. When this rule applies, it overrides Rule 6.

Rule 7.1 OVERTAKING (This rule was adapted from the FISLY rules where boats may be confined to a narrow zone on a beach.)

ENGAGEMENT: The overtaking maneuver is engaged as less than 6 feet separates the extremities of the overtaken yacht from any extremity of the overtaking yacht. (That means that if you are 7 feet away you are not yet overtaking. Six feet is not very much. If the overtaking yacht is just inching by (as is often the case) it is a reasonable boundary. If the closing speeds are faster more room is needed to provide room and opportunity for the yacht being overtaken so they don't feel it is necessary to take evasive action to avoid a collision (Rules 1). Prudence and good judgment are called for)

DISENGAGEMENT: The overtaking maneuver is accomplished as soon a more than six feet separates the extremities of the overtaking yacht from the extremities of the overtaken yacht. (this applies at the end of the overtaking process.)

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MANEUVER: The pilot of the overtaking yacht is responsible for the maneuver. (The overtaker has responsibility to stay out of the overtaken yacht's way. Enough room may mean much more than 6 feet. As mentioned above, leave plenty of room if your closing speed is moderate or high)

THE OVERTAKEN YACHT must, if sailing in a straight line, maintain its course or move aside, and if turning, proceed with a normal maneuver. Nevertheless, the pilot of the overtaken yacht may, when meeting an obstacle, carry

out a turn, in order to avoid it. (I.E., don't do anything abrupt while being overtaken. Since the overtaking yacht is generally coming up from behind the overtaken yacht should be reasonably aware of any yachts gaining from behind. Likewise the overtaking yacht needs to anticipate that the overtaken yacht may not know the overtaker is coming up from behind. Extra lateral room between the yachts gives everyone more time and better visibility to allow them respond appropriately)

THE OVERTAKER must avoid the course of the overtaken. It is an infringement of the rules to compel the overtaken yacht to change its course or slacken speed in order to avoid a collision. (One more time, leaving plenty of room between the yachts minimizes the likelihood that this will be an issue)

RULE 7.2 A yacht tacking or jibing shall keep clear of a yacht on a tack. When two yachts are tacking or jibing at the same time, the yacht on the left shall keep clear. (Generally the maneuver lasts from when the yacht passes from head to wind until its sails are filled on the new tack. The yacht may slow dramatically when tacking so be sure to leave enough room between yourself and an oncoming yacht. If you tack too close to an oncoming yacht you may get your sail filled but you might not have given the other yacht room and opportunity to avoid hitting you).

RULE 7.3 A windward yacht must be given room to bear off if in danger of capsizing, but must immediately return to her original heading. (this is an old rule from when we sailed with reaching legs on the course. It can be a bit confusing. When beating to weather you should always head up or ease the sheet to get out of an excessive hike. Bearing off from a windy beat is the cause of most capsizes. If you are on a broad reach bearing off is a better bet (although easing the sheet still works best with most yachts, especially on a beam reach). There are unusual situations where the wind might shift dramatically where Rule 7.3 might come into play. In general, when you are moving fast in any direction but beating, be aware that a windward yacht may need to bear down on you to manage a hike. If you see a boat in a high, uncontrolled hike, expect that they might bear off out of desperation. If sailors avoid sitting on the sheet they will avoid most uncontrolled hikes. Also, for all of us beginners, cleating the sheet seems like a great way to make sailing easier. It is not. Everyone who has tried this (cleats, knots, self cleating blocks, etc) has either tipped over or at least scared themselves. No experienced sailor uses a cleat when racing).

RULE 7.4 A yacht moving shall keep clear of a yacht that is stopped.

RULE 7.5 A yacht restarting shall keep clear of a yacht that is moving under sail power. (Look before you start pushing your yacht. There is a natural tendency to run with your head down.

Boats hitting each other leaving the start line is common. Talking to your nearby competitors before the start, making sure all the nearby boats are pointed the same way and watching where you run and where your competitors are running will help minimize the likelihood of getting tangled up).

RULE 7.6 A yacht not racing or a yacht which has finished a race shall keep clear of the course and all yachts still racing. (If you are not in a race stay well away from the course. You can sail from camp to the starting line but be very careful to do so away from where the competing yachts are likely to sail and be careful about pedestrians making their way to and from the starting area. In some wind directions this can be tricky. Any racer should be skilled at handling is yacht in high winds in tight quarters. If you don't have these skills or conditions are too severe, take your sails down to move your yacht).

RULE 8 A yacht on the outside shall not deprive an overlapping yacht on the inside of room to pass marks and obstructions. Any overtaking done near a mark must be done on the outside. (Mark roundings are easy places to get into collisions, especially the leeward mark. With the high speeds, large changes in travel direction and the relative lack of steerability of the yacht at the leeward mark, great prudence is called for. In most collisions the 6 foot overtaking rule (7.1) only comes into play for about a tenth of a second, making it of little practical use. It is almost always best to go outside of the yachts in front of you. Watch out for slower yachts, slowing yachts, out of control yachts, people who should be avoiding you but are not, can not, etc. Take into account that different pilots prefer different approaches and exits from the mark. Most of all remember rule number one! It is hard to get past another yacht at the marks but is very easy to loose a race or the regatta, or worse, get into a collision. The focus should be on getting around unscathed so you can pass your competition on your way to the next mark rounding.)

RULE 8.1 A yacht approaching and unable to clear an obstruction without fouling or endangering another yacht may signal the other

yacht for room to clear. The signaled yacht shall at once give room and if it is necessary for her to tack or jibe, the signaling yacht shall also tack or jibe immediately after. (This is hard to do in a quickly evolving situation as it is often difficult to hear each other or see hand signals. If in doubt, give the other yacht room and opportunity and assume they have a reason for straying from the best course to the next mark. If it really interferes with your position in the race course, ask them about it after the race and, if necessary, file a protest)

RULE 8.2 A yacht that hits any part of a mark will be assessed three penalty points. Under NO circumstances should a pilot attempt to replace a mark that has been hit during a race (This should be done under the oversight of the race manager between races. We used to have a rule that allowed you to avoid penalty points by replacing the mark but decided this is too dangerous. If you hit the mark it is bad form not to report it to the race committee yourself).

Other thoughts related to the rules

- Remember to cross the finish line at the end of every lap.
- DO NOT cross the finish line in the wrong direction. In addition to the obvious risk of hitting other boats you will be disqualified from the race and will look inept to all your sailing buddies watching the race. Take it from one who knows, crossing the wrong way is easier to do than you might think
- Make sure you know which marks you are rounding. Lots of races are lost by going around the wrong marks. The sailor in front is *most* likely to do this. It is common for several boats to follow a leader around the wrong mark.
- Remember to round the marks in the right direction.
- Once the race is finished, get off the course. In some cases the race committee may wave you back out onto the course so they can start the next fleet.
- Do not sail across the start line after a race. Sail around the end of the start line. In windy conditions this often results in a high speed reach upwind of the line. In this situation consider beating to weather at moderate speed and then heading deep down wind, also at moderate speed to get back to camp or the starting area. Yachts may be walked across the start line in reasonable wind conditions as long as they do not interfere with yachts that

are finishing or starting. If you do this, be especially mindful that other finishers behind you may be making high speed reaches just upwind of the start line.

- Low visibility: Occasionally a strong gust will roll over the race course and reduce visibility to low levels. In most cases, the prudent thing to do is slow down to a speed that allows you to spot other boats soon enough to avoid them. There is a good chance that the race will be abandoned if this occurs. Stopping completely has the liability of eliminating your ability to move your boat quickly however in some extreme conditions stopping may still be the best course of action. If you can find it, the side of the lake is a better place to stop than on the course. Continuing to sail at full speed in low visibility conditions is foolhardy.
- Protests: There is a tradition with NALSA landsailing races of avoiding protests. The best way to resolve many disputes, is a tactful discussion with the other sailor. If that is not reasonable (high emotions or little likelihood of resolution) and the issue needs to be resolved then a protest is in order. If you are involved in a protest please remember that it is not personal. The protest process is one of the ways we fine-tune the rules to minimize risk and to achieve fair racing.

Comments on selected safety and courtesy guidelines

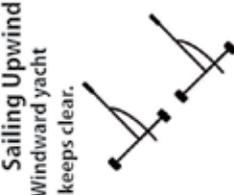
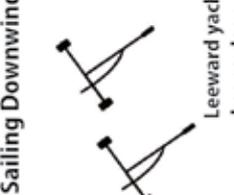
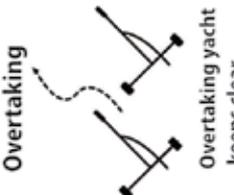
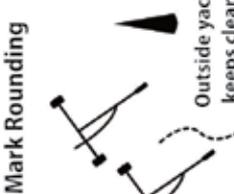
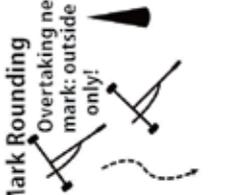
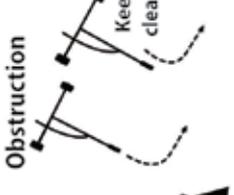
Parked yachts must be restrained in a manor that has a high certainty of preventing the yacht from sailing away unattended. The Race Committee may assess penalty points to any runaway yacht (Every year a boat or two sails off on its own, often as a result of a big gust or dust devil or a little gust when there was no wind. Know your boat and secure it well-always)

Landyachts should not be sailed between campsites. (too little room, too many kids)

When sailing and returning to the camp area, landsailors should slow down well before nearing the campsite areas. (Once you get close you run out of room VERY fast. It is always better slow or stop further out so you have room to deal with any unexpected situations. Also sailing back and forth in front of camp can be dangerous with boats, people and vehicles coming out from camp. Please sail well off shore.)

Beverage cans and other miscellaneous trash should go home with you. Leave our desert as clean as you found it.

Abbreviated Sailing Rules

<p>RULE # 1 AVOID A COLLISION! Help anyone who is injured or in danger!</p>	<p>Do not alter course so as to prevent a non-right-of-way yacht from keeping clear! (Provide room and opportunity.)</p>	<p>Converging Yachts Keep clear of yacht to the right!</p>	<p>Meeting Head-on Both stay to the right.</p>
<p>Sailing Upwind Windward yacht keeps clear.</p> 	<p>Sailing Downwind Leeward yacht keeps clear.</p> 	<p>Overtaking Overtaking yacht keeps clear.</p> 	<p>Mark Rounding Outside yacht keeps clear.</p> 
<p>Mark Rounding Overtaking near mark: outside only!</p> 	<p>Obstruction Keep clear!</p> 	<p>Do not tack or jibe if collision is probable! If two yachts are tacking or jibing the one on the left will keep clear.</p>	<p>After finishing a race, do not interfere with yachts still racing! Do not sail across the Start Line!</p>