ISAF Racing Rules Question and Answer Service

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Situation

The race committee signals a change of the next leg of the course at a single leeward mark by displaying flag C mounted on a long pole, holding up a placard with a green triangle, and giving a sound signal by blowing a whistle repeatedly at one-second intervals. The boat making the signals is located about 30m directly downwind of the mark, and the breeze is 15-20 knots.

After rounding the mark, some boats sail to the new mark and some sail to the old mark. The race committee protests the boats that sailed to the old mark, and in the hearing they were disqualified for breaking rule 28 by not sailing the course.

The disqualified boats then requested redress, claiming that because of wind noise, they could not hear the whistle; and because flag C was displayed directly downwind from the mark, they could not see the flag.

Question 1

What are the requirements for the display of a flag? Does the race committee have to do more than simply raise the flag?

Answer 1

Rule 33 and Race Signals do not specify how the flag shall be displayed. A flag is displayed when it is clearly visible.

Question 2

What are the requirements with regard to the quality of the sound signal; in windy conditions where a whistle may not be heard over the noise from the sail, must the race committee use an air horn or some other means to ensure the sound signal is heard, or is it sufficient to simply blow a whistle repeatedly?

Answer 2

There are no explicit requirements for the quality of the sound signal; some whistles are more audible than some horns, and whistles are also more reliable.

Question 3

Is there any preferred positioning for a boat signalling a change of course?

Answer 3

The course change must be signalled before the boats begin the leg. The question does not identify the type, size, number or downwind sailing characteristics of the boats. These will affect the positioning of the committee vessel to comply with this requirement.