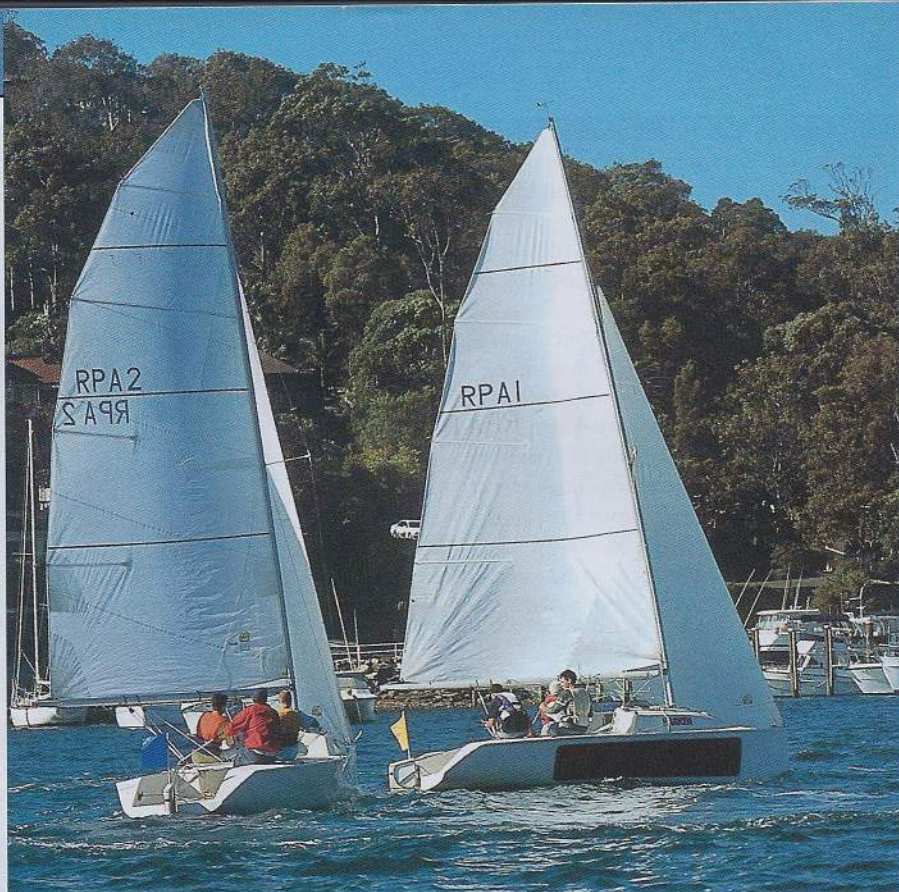


Royal Prince Alfred YC youth squad practising match racing in the club's fleet of Elliott 5.9s. This is a tailing situation in a pre-start.

Match racing need not be daunting for the fleet sailor, explains Lesley Jean Roberts



Match Moves

A SAILOR with competent fleet racing skills need not be shy of match racing. You require skills no more complex than handling your boat and taking evasive action when you get too close to an opponent.

Match racing incorporates a direct opponent situation of one-on-one racing.

Commence your race tactics five minutes before the start gun. Your crew must have the boat well under control and need to have locked into your opening gambit before the preparatory signal.

The start period is a window that remains open from the start signal until two minutes have elapsed.

The course usually consists of a starboard rounding of a windward leg and a downhill return for two laps.

In one-on-one racing, there is neither the distraction nor the observation afforded by fleet racing. Relative changes between yourself and your single opponent assume an all-encompassing importance.

Start gate

The start gate is composed of two lines at a 90° angle to the starting line. Imagine a letter H with the horizontal line the start line. Boats must be at their assigned end and outside of the H. At five

Start gate

Port end

Blue

Enter on port tack

Run deep, well below line, cross opponent to leeward, tack onto starboard, hunt

Starboard end

Yellow

Enter on starboard tack

Dip, point up, hunt

minutes, be right next to your buoy and be ready to cross from the windward side of the start line as soon the four minutes is sounded. Dip hard and sharp.

Application of rules

See Appendix C – Match Racing Rules in the *Racing Rules of Sailing 2001-2004* (AYF Blue Book).

C2.4: The gybe completes when the main fills.

Signals Time (mins)	Flags	Meaning	Action
10 or 7	F up	Attention	Practise circles, tack, gybe, tack
6	F down		
5	Numeral up	Warning	Stay very close to start mark
4	P up	Gate open (Prep)	Dip hard behind line. Hunt, hunt, hunt
2	Blue or yellow if penalty applies	Gate shut	Hunt, hunt, hunt
0	P & Numeral down	Start	If in controlling position, do not start until opponent peeled away
- 2		Time to start is over	You must cross the start line before the time-out

C2.5: You may change course and cause the other boat to immediately alter course (if other boat given room to keep clear).

When the other boat is trying to steer to leeward and as long as not overlapped, you may steer to leeward.

C2.6: Don't challenge with upwind buoy room rules unless sure of your facts.

Starboard rounding: When tacking at the zone (from starboard), if a clear astern boat (on port) could have avoided overlapping inside you (by luffing), then you do need not give them room.

C2.7: Use arm signals – pointing (obstruction and water).

C6.1: Wave the Y flag for every infringement where you were right, no matter how minor.

RR13: If a starboard tacker is approaching the port layline and you (on port) cannot cross in front and also cannot lay the mark, take the stern and tack (or fake a tack). In cases of simultaneous tacking, the boat on the left (the previous starboard boat) must keep clear. The boat on the right is always right.

RR14: Never hit another boat. If you are trapped and a collision is imminent, call the other boat off and accept blame rather than collide.

RR17.1: When overlapped you may luff head to wind before the starting signal or after the start if the overlap was not established from behind.

Communicate

Promote talking within the boat. One person should assume the role of calling if you are controlling or not; for example, "We are on starboard and within the lay-lines. They are on port."

Circles

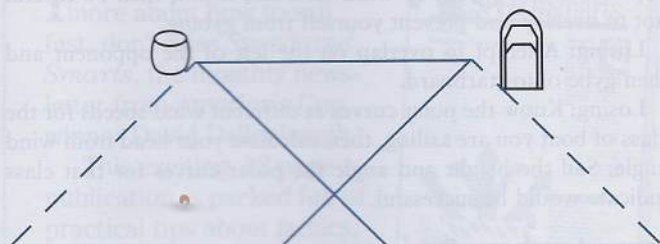
The basic manoeuvre of control is the circle. You have about five minutes to learn how to make a strange boat do continuous circles. Get in the boat and practise.

Can the boat circle with the jib flogging? If it can, forget the jib and concentrate only on gunwale height and main. Round up, windward gunwale lifted, main hard on. Tack, dump all main, pump windward gunwale down while bearing away. Gybe, lifting windward gunwale and bring main on hard.

When you exit a batch of circles, always straight line into a controlling position, otherwise keep circling and try again next loop.

Control at the start

There are four lay-lines to the start; two buoys, both with a port and a starboard approach. Think of the two approaches as streets where the aim is to run the opposition off the road.



1. Two streets formed by the four lay-lines.

Above the windward lay lines: You are controlling if on same tack and:

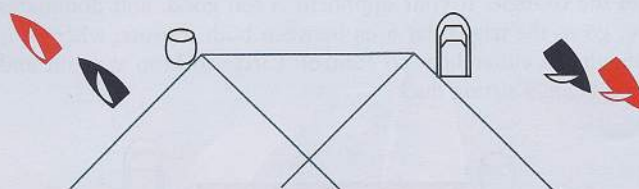
■ Sailing upwind (away from street) and are astern by less than one-third boat length on either tack.

■ Sailing downwind (returning to street) and overlapped to leeward on either gybe.

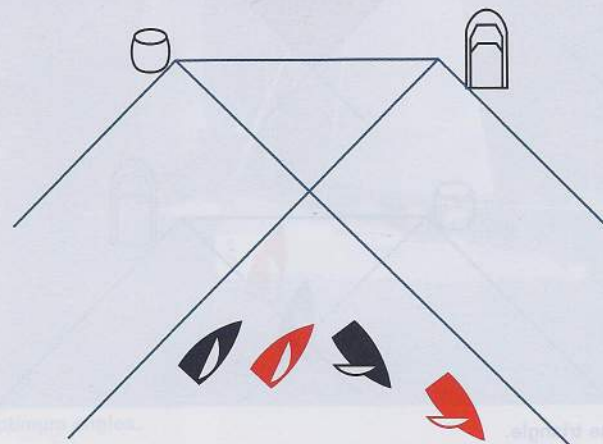
Below the leeward lay lines: You are controlling if same tack and:

■ Sailing downwind (away from street) and astern, one-third boat length to leeward on either gybe.

■ Sailing upwind (towards street), overlapped half boat length to windward on either tack.



2. Boats sailing above the lay-lines.

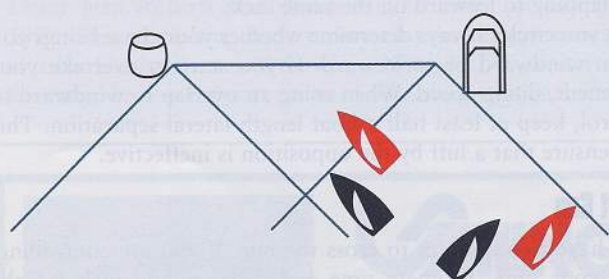


3. Boats sailing below the lay-lines.

In the street: You are controlling if astern and overlapped to:

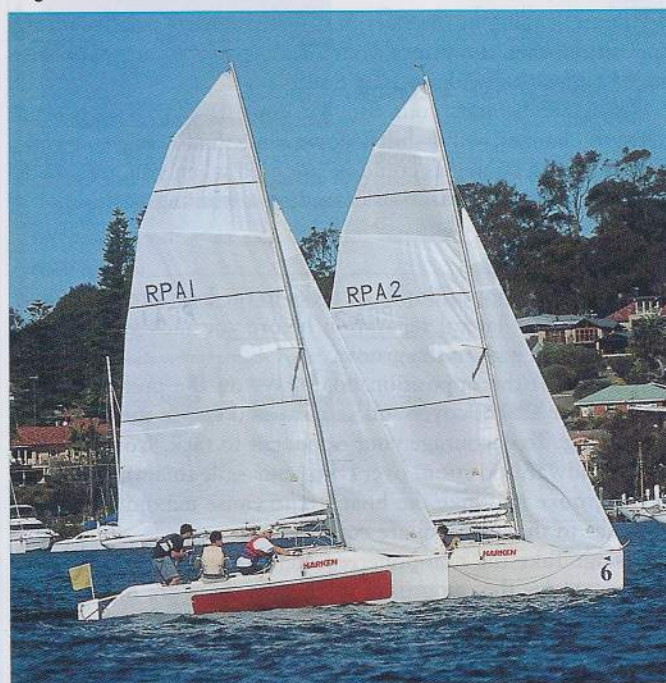
■ Leeward and are within the layline for that tack.

■ Windward and are within the laylines and are on the opposite tack to the approach.

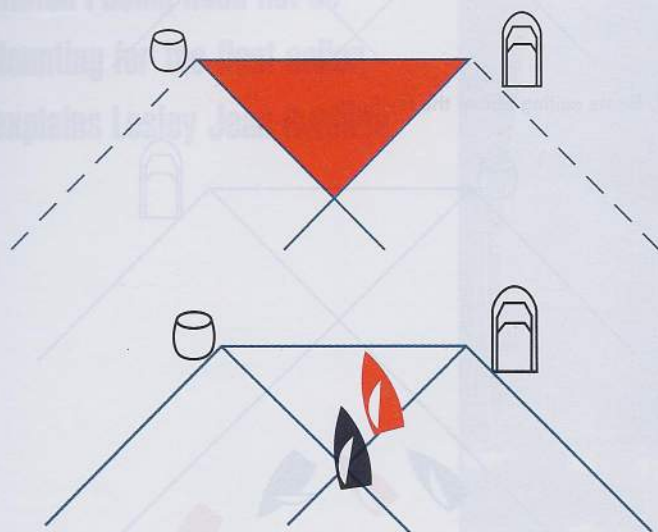


4. Boats sailing in the street.

The 'dial up', stalled in the triangle where it is difficult for either boat to gain control.



In the triangle: If your opponent is too good, and dominates you, go to the triangular area between both transits, where it is difficult for either boat to control. Circle to keep way on and avoid being a sitting duck.



5. The triangle.

Hunt

Hunt, hunt, hunt. Do not be tentative, even on the first start. Control and lock the opponent outside of the lay-lines. Drive the opposition out by approaching from behind, overlapping to leeward and luffing until they are forced to tack. Prevent a gybe by overlapping to leeward on the same tack.

As you circle, always determine whether your chase brings you up to windward or to leeward. If you start to overtake your opponent, dump speed. When using an overlap to windward to control, keep at least half a boat length lateral separation. This will ensure that a luff by the opposition is ineffective.

Start Gun

You have two minutes to cross the line. If you are controlling, take your time. Estimate time and distance and wait for the opposition to gybe/tack to escape your control before you power off for the line.

Racing

If you are leading at the start, having imposed a penalty on the opposition, then the rest of your race consists of normal covering of opposition with nothing fancy.

If you are behind, your tool kit consists of lay-lines, wind strength changes, wind shifts, downwind shadowing and guile. The following strategies could be adopted when you are attacking from a losing position or defending a winning position.

The work

Winning: If the opposition boat tacks to the least preferred tack, hesitate to gain lateral separation before you tack with a loose cover and sail high in the groove.

Winning: If the opposition boat stays on the preferred tack, then impose a tight cover and sail low and fast in the groove.

Winning: To encourage your opponent to tack, from a directly to windward position, over trim your sails (main), point low in the groove and hike the boat flat to cause maximum air disturbance to the boat you are covering.

Losing: Take the non-preferred course (near buildings, trees) and encourage the opposition to cover if there are obstructions that could be used to your benefit.

Losing: To escape a cover do a rapid dead stop and hope the opposition will over shoot you allowing you to tack on their stern.



Nearing a lay-line, if you cannot cross in front, take the opponent's stern.

Losing: Sail low and fast if the polar curves for that class indicate it would be successful

Windward mark

When approaching the top mark together with the opposition boat, it may pay to delay your kite set at the top mark, both when losing or winning, to maintain flexibility of movement.

Losing: If near the lay-line and you cannot cross in front of an opposite tack opponent, take a stern. If after the bear away you cannot lay the mark on that tack, then immediately tack. In cases of simultaneous tacking the boat on the left (the previous starboard boat) must keep clear. I.e: Boat on the right is always right.

Running

Winning: If you are defending against an opponent attempting to overtake to windward, luff less ruthlessly if you are not on the preferred gybe.

Losing: Worry opponent with attempts to overtake to windward. Choose your luff to coincide with a lightened pressure several seconds prior to a gust.

Losing: Close cover from behind and to windward to disturb breeze.

Losing: If the opposition is carrying you up, assess whether it is possible to overtake to windward and if not, then be careful not to overlap and prevent yourself from gybing.

Losing: Attempt to overlap on the left of the opponent and then gybe onto starboard.

Losing: Know the polar curves at different wind speeds for the class of boat you are sailing, then calculate your head from wind angle. Sail the height and angle the polar curves for that class indicate would be successful.

Leeward mark rounding

Always fight for the inside overlap when going for the leeward mark.

Turn sharply away from an inside overlapping boat when just outside the zone to break an overlap.

Beguile from behind

Initiate a tacking duel and once a rhythm is established, fake a tack when you see the opposition watching or listening.

Delayed penalties

Keep count of both your own and your opposition's penalties. If you both have one each, then they cancel each other out. A



Downwind, know the polar curves of the boat you are sailing to calculate optimum angles.

penalty is three-quarters of a circle (270°) and the last outstanding penalty should be taken just before crossing the finish line.

Beating Run	gybe then go to close hauled tack then bear away
----------------	---

If you get one outstanding penalty – delay.

If you get two outstanding – take one penalty asap (after starting).

If you get three outstanding – disqualified

Choose to take your penalty so that minimum disruption is caused to your race plan. As you approach the windward mark

port lay-line, overlay by one and a-half lengths and instead of tacking for the mark, bear away, gybe and come close hauled. You will end up on the port lay-line on port tack, making the mark with very little lost ground.

About the Author

Lesley Jean Roberts started coaching international sailing in 1992 when she became chief instructor for the Philippine national team. She later coached the Hong Kong 470 Olympic team. Recently, she was appointed as the Cook Islands national coach.

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