

Barging

The MAST website rules quiz has an excellent discussion of the rules regarding barging at the start. Barging is the foul committed by a boat to windward not keeping clear of a boat to leeward before the start.

Please look at: http://www.mastracing.org/quiz_3.htm

Here are some examples of barging:

The boat to windward is early and runs down the line to avoid going over the line early. If there is a boat to leeward of them, they are barging if they continue down the line and cause that boat to alter course to avoid a collision.

A boat is making a run at the committee boat end of the line on a close hauled starboard tack. They are just able to cross right next to the committee boat. A boat reaching down toward the back end of the committee boat decides they can “sneak” in between the leeward boat and the committee boat (diagram on MAST website).

A leeward boat is early for the start. They decide to luff up to slow their boat and kill time. Any boat to windward of them who does not move to avoid hitting them or prevent them from luffing is barging.

How to Prevent Barging:

Imagine a boat starting on a close hauled starboard tack, pointing as high as she can, which will take her right next to the committee boat when the gun goes off. Any boat to the right or windward of that boat is in danger of barging. It is dangerous to start from that area.

Be the boat on that perfect line to the RC boat. Here's how:

Do the classic Vanderbilt Start.

Before the start, sail on starboard tack in clear air, with your boat in race trim, beating just as you would on the windward leg of the race. Write down your compass heading. You should do this on port as well to determine how the wind is shifting, which end of the line is favored and how well you are pointing but that's another story. Add or subtract 180 from that compass heading. Leave the transom of the RC boat with two minutes remaining on that heading. Tack with 1 minute, 15 seconds left and sail your boat back to the RC boat. If you are pointing high, any boat to leeward of you can't point high enough to “close the door” on you at the committee boat. They can luff up and you will have to respond. But eventually, they will fall off to a beat, they will still be some distance from that perfect position at the RC boat.

In practice, when you tack, you can't immediately start pointing as well as when you are powered up. You need to foot a little to get your boatspeed back, etc. So leave the RC boat at your starboard tack heading, minus 160 or 170 degrees. A very slight barge.

If you are returning to the RC boat on this perfect line, everyone to the right or to windward of you is burdened to keep clear of you.

What if you are caught in a barging position?

If you are to windward of the boat on that perfect starboard tack run to the RC boat, you need to take EARLY action to avoid barging. Consider any boat to leeward of you, or to the left of you a "concrete wall." It helps to have a spotter on the bow pointing out boats to leeward of you or any boats in your area.

The safest course of action is to luff up your boat, sail head to wind, to slow your boat and make sure you aren't converging on the leeward boat. Wait for that boat to start or move down the line, then fall off and sail across the line. Watch for the next row of leeward boats though. If there is a parade of boats starting right at the RC boat, you have to wait until all of them are clear to start. This may make you late for the start but you have no rights to make a perfect start from the position you are in.

Another option is to duck behind the leeward boat. Be careful that there aren't other leeward boats behind the boat you are ducking. Again, this may make you late for the start but you have no rights. When you duck the leeward boat and clear across her transom, you are now the leeward boat! You can point up and the "now windward" boat has to keep clear.

The key is to make these decisions several boatlengths in advance of the encounter. If there is a boat to your left and you are converging, you KNOW you are barging and need to correct YOUR course!

Running down the line.

It is common for a boat early for the start to reach down the line to avoid going over early. Any boat to your left or heaven forbid, directly in front of you, is the leeward boat. They need to be treated like a concrete wall. The starting line is NOT a concrete wall. You must go over the line early if you are in this situation.

A safer way to kill time when you are early for the start is to luff up and slow your boat. You can also ease the sheets all the way out and try to kill boatspeed that way. The key is to make these adjustments when there are at least 30 seconds left for the start. Don't wait until you are on the line to decide you need to take action.

Sportmanship

There are no protests in MAST. MAST bylaws do allow the RC chairman to disqualify a boat that causes an un-safe situation though.

Let's say you have squeaked in at the RC boat, pushing a leeward boat down from the "pole position." You have sailed through the "concrete wall." Some argue they had a right to this position to avoid hitting the RC boat. That is BS. They should have corrected their position before the decision became to barge or hit the RC boat. But if this is where you find yourself, you should luff up head-to-wind and allow the boat you have offended to sail clearly out of your gas.

If you run down the line and push a leeward boat "a little" before the start, you should do the same thing. Don't add insult to injury by continuing to "lay on them" up the windward leg. Luff up and let them pass clearly.

The Corinthian thing to do when you foul another boat is to withdraw from the race and inform RC to not score you.