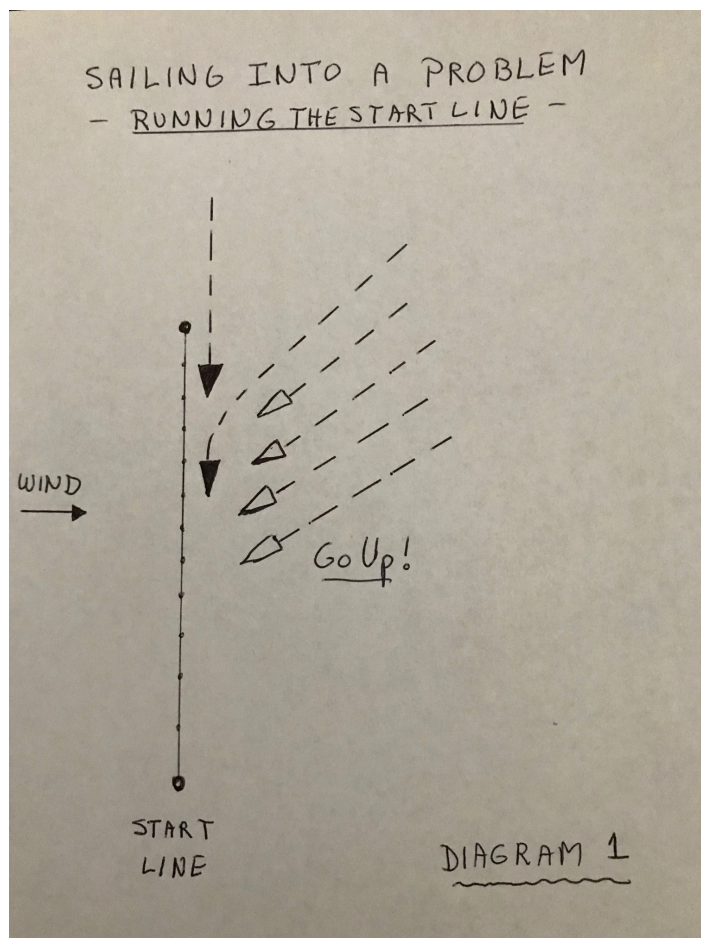


Sailing into a Problem - Running the Start Line

At the start, some skippers tend to sail down the start line on a broad reach, thinking they simply can head up and start as the gun goes off. Or a skipper approaches the line close hauled but gets there too early and then bears off and reaches down the line. Both boats have now created a high risk situation for themselves where they have no rights because any boats approaching the line to leeward of these boats have all the rights. Take a look at this situation in Diagram 1:

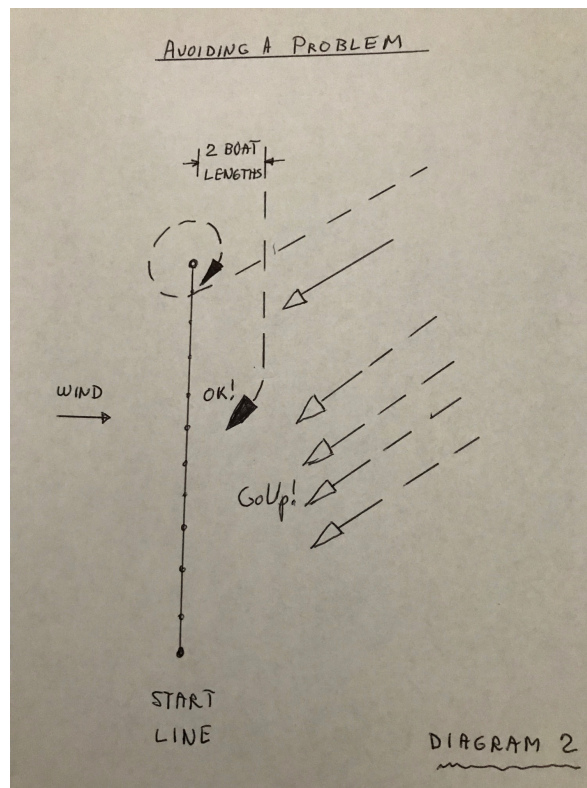


The solid black boats are “running the line” and are sailing into a problem where there is little escape. The problem is that all the boats to leeward have right of way (windward/leeward rule) and the solid black boats must get out of their way. The black boats are pinned between the line and the boats approaching from their leeward side. If the solid black boats head up they will be over early. The solid boats will often simply try to continue to sail down the line. They will get protested or create a massive pile up after a collision. A very unpopular result!

Avoiding the Problem

To avoid this problem, it is best to simply not to “run the line”. If you approach the line close hauled and are early, the best escape is to sail across the line with speed and circle around the end (my favorite). You will keep up speed and probably only be a boat length or two behind the fleet. You will have plenty of room to maneuver and to sail in any direction you want.

If you must sail down the line, do it 1-2 boat lengths BEHIND the line. Then you will still have room to maneuver and avoid being pinned between the line and boats to your leeward. Take a look at these “avoiding the problem” maneuvers in Diagram 2:



Practice, practice, practice

On a “fun race day” at the pond, purposefully get to the line early and sail round the end. Keep your speed up as you tack and gibe back to the line. See where you end up...probably in not too bad a position. Secondly, purposefully get to the line early and at 2 boat lengths before the line, start to head down the line. Be ready to head up or otherwise avoid approaching boats. See how this worksheet out for you. Each maneuver above depends on where boats are around you. The key is to make your decision 2 boat lengths before you get to the line. So keep looking ahead of your boat. Don’t sail into trouble. Instead of just racing every race, practice these maneuvers to improve your skill set, so you can “avoid the problems”. Good luck!