

2026 IMA Maxi European Championship

Question for Officials

Date: 2026-05-27

Question No: 03

Question For: Protest Committee

Question:

Dears Sirs and Madam,

Bella Mente respectfully requests clarification on the interpretation of NOR 1.C.11.(a), specifically the requirement that Owner Driver break(s) “shall take place between mark rounding’s and avoid imminent maneuvers (tack/gybe).”

Bella Mente understands the purpose of this rule is to prevent a relief helmsman from taking control immediately before a maneuver in a way that could provide a competitive advantage. For example, this could include a relief helmsman taking over just before an important tactical maneuver such as a lee-bow tack.

The competitor notes that the rule does not state that the Owner Driver or Charter Helm must be steering during every maneuver in the race. If the Owner Driver or Charter Helm is already on a legitimate break within the limits of the rule, and is perhaps away from the helm for practical reasons, should they be expected to return for every maneuver? Would exceptions apply if the Owner Driver or Charter Helm is taking a comfort break or eating or drinking?

In that context, the competitor seeks guidance from the Jury on whether “imminent maneuvers” refers to maneuvers that are already anticipated or developing when the break begins, rather than maneuvers that only become necessary later due to changing race conditions.

In short, initiating an Owner Driver break immediately before a tactical maneuver such as a lee-bow, covering tack, or gybe would clearly be contrary to the intent of the rule. However, a routine maneuver carried out later during an open course should not be considered a violation of either the intent or the wording of the rule.

Bella Mente believes this interpretation reflects the practical intent and application of the rule, and the yacht therefore intends to continue racing in this manner unless and until the Jury clarifies otherwise.

Thank you.

Answer:

As long as the break was initiated when there was no imminent manoeuvre about to happen, if one were to happen during the break there is no requirement for the Owner Driver or Charterer Helm to return driving the boat. This does not apply to mark roundings.

The International Jury

