

The Blue Boats [C1]

La regata Oxford-Cambridge è una competizione che risale a quasi 200 anni fa, in cui i vogatori dilettanti di entrambe le università si sfidano su un percorso di 6,8 chilometri.

The international appeal of the Oxford v. Cambridge Boat Race lies in its long history of almost two hundred years and the renown of both universities as pioneering and prestigious educational institutions. Another factor that makes the Boat Race special is that those competing are all amateurs. All students who participate are simply committed to their sport and willing to make sacrifices to gain one of the eight rowing seats. Oxford post-grad student Sian Dennett hopes to be awarded one of these seats in the upcoming race, slated for 13 April 2025. As she explained, each of the rowers in the boat has a different role. **Sian Dennett:** The stroke seat is the person who's setting the rhythm for the crew, and the seven seat, who's sat behind them, is kind of backing them up, so that you have a pair of oars, and they're the ones setting the rhythm. Typically, the four following them, so that's six, five, four, three seats, they're often called the 'engine room'. They're kind of where you think your biggest, strongest, most powerful rowers might be sat. And then the two seat and the bow seat are at the front of the boat, the furthest away from the cox, and typically they're lighter rowers, maybe more technical rowers. That's the general gist.

THE RIGHT COX

Apart from the eight rowers there is a cox, a person sitting at the stern of the boat and shouting instructions to the rest of the crew. While some downplay this role, Sian says this member of the crew is essential. **Sian Dennett:** So, so important, like crucial, race-winning potentially. Having the right cox will absolutely change the outcome of the race. I think it's quite common that a cox is seen as just a steersperson. And that's so far from the case. Yes, they do steer the boat. And in a race like the Boat Race where you're side by side going down the course and there is one line of movement

through the course that is the most optimal, like the fastest in terms of the flow of the water, you always are fighting for the fastest water, which puts your [crew](#) in the best position. But there is only one of those lines, and there are obviously two [crews](#) that are both fighting for it. So your [cox](#) plays an important role in giving you physically the best advantage that they can. But, [on top of that](#), they are so crucial for helping to set the rhythm with the [stern](#) pair. You know, it's quite difficult to get eight people rowing perfectly in time.

STROKE RATE

When competing, there are certain parameters that rowers aim to achieve. Finding an optimal [stroke rate](#) between all [crew](#) members can be a challenge, as Sian explained. **Sian Dennett:** There's definitely a kind of optimal [stroke rate](#) that you would want to find in a race like that. It's a balance, right? Because it's a long course; 6.8 kilometres is more than three times the Olympic rowing events' length, which is two kilometres. And you need to be going at the [rate](#) which allows you to find the most speed across the whole course without it causing you [to burn out](#), and it has to also be sustainable. So, you know, if you were doing a five-hundred metre sprint, you would be way over forty [strokes](#) per minute. Maybe we might [be hitting](#) something like that [off the start](#), at the very beginning of the race, but it's not something that you would look to hold for almost twenty minutes, which is often how long a Boat Race takes. So I think, typically, Boat Race [crews](#) tend to [rate](#) around thirty-four-ish. And it does vary, it just is a [crew](#)-dependent thing. You put everything into getting the boat speed as high as possible as quickly as you can [off the start](#) and then you just try and maintain that throughout the race. www.theboatrace.org

Glossary

- **gist** = essenza
- **stern** = poppa
- **downplay** = minimizzare
- **on top of that** = inoltre
- **lies** = trovarsi
- **to be awarded** = assegnare
- **oars** = remi
- **cox** = timoniere
- **to burn out** = esaurirsi
- **be hitting** = raggiungere
- **outcome** = risultato
- **rate** = ritmo
- **off the start** = dal principio
- **committed** = impegnarsi
- **rowing seats** = posti per il canottaggio
- **slated** = programmare
- **backing them up** = supportare
- **renown** = fama
- **willing** = disposti
- **engine room** = sala macchine
- **bow** = prua
- **stroke** = bracciata
- **steersperson** = guida
- **crew** = equipaggio
- **ish** = circa