

## = The Boat Race 1996 =

The 142nd Boat Race took place on 6 April 1996 . Held annually , the Boat Race is a side @-@ by @-@ side rowing race between crews from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge along the River Thames . Umpired by a former Blue , Mike Sweeney , Cambridge won by two @-@ and @-@ three @-@ quarter lengths in the second @-@ fastest time in the history of the race .

In the reserve race , Cambridge 's Goldie defeated Oxford 's Isis in a record time , while Cambridge won the Women 's Boat Race .

## = = Background = =

The Boat Race is a side @-@ by @-@ side rowing competition between the University of Oxford ( sometimes referred to as the " Dark Blues " ) and the University of Cambridge ( sometimes referred to as the " Light Blues " ) . First held in 1829 , the race takes place on the 4 @. @ 2 @-@ mile ( 6 @. @ 8 km ) Championship Course on the River Thames in southwest London . The rivalry is a major point of honour between the two universities and followed throughout the United Kingdom and broadcast worldwide . Cambridge went into the race as reigning champions , having won the 1995 race by four lengths , with Cambridge leading overall with 72 victories to Oxford 's 68 ( excluding the " dead heat " of 1877 ) .

The first Women 's Boat Race took place in 1927 , but did not become an annual fixture until the 1960s . Up until 2014 , the contest was conducted as part of the Henley Boat Races , but as of the 2015 race , it is held on the River Thames , on the same day as the men 's main and reserve races . The reserve race , contested between Oxford 's Isis boat and Cambridge 's Goldie boat has been held since 1965 . It usually takes place on the Tideway , prior to the main Boat Race .

The previous year 's race was watched by seven million viewers in the United Kingdom alone . Oxford coach Dan Topolski suggested that part of the appeal was that the contest was " absolutely amateur " but still " represents quality " . Former Oxford Blue and Olympic gold medallist Jonny Searle agreed , calling the Boat Race " a unique experience " . Both Topolski and Searle predicted a close race ; Cambridge coach Robin Williams agreed : " We 've got to accord Oxford some respect . I think we 're again the better crew ... but the only way to find out is on the water . " Penny Chuter , one of the other Oxford coaches , noted " Cambridge have a continuity ... but we have more power this year . " Cambridge 's boat club president John Carver had earlier withdrawn from the race with injury . Oxford 's director of rowing , Steve Royle , said of his crew : " these guys love a scrap . "

The 250 officers from Wandsworth Police lining the embankments were able to replace their traditional helmets for peaked caps for the first time , in order to discourage members of the crowd from removing them and throwing them into the river . The race was sponsored for the tenth consecutive year by Beefeater Gin , and umpired by former Cambridge Blue Mike Sweeney .

## = = Crews = =

The Oxford crew weighed an average of 1 @. @ 25 pounds ( 0 @. @ 57 kg ) more per rower than their opponents . Each crew saw just one former Blue return , Clegg for Oxford and Barnett for Cambridge , in addition to Barnett , Cambridge 's crew contained five former Goldie rowers . Oxford 's crew more international rowers with four Americans and a Canadian .

## = = Race = =

Cambridge started as pre @-@ race favourites . They won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station . After a close start , where neither boat took a significant lead , Cambridge were a half a length up at the Mile Post . They pushed on at Harrods Furniture Depository to take two thirds of a length lead over Oxford by Hammersmith Bridge . Under pressure from the Dark Blues , Whyman steered his crew to record times between the Mile Post and Barnes Bridge , Hammersmith Bridge to Barnes Bridge , Chiswick Steps to Barnes Bridge and Chiswick Steps to the finishing post .

Cambridge won by two @-@ and @-@ three @-@ quarter lengths in a time of 16 minutes 58 seconds , the second @-@ fastest time on record ( thirteen seconds slower than the winning time in the 1984 race ) .

In the reserve race , Cambridge 's Goldie won by eleven lengths , in a record time , over Isis . It was Cambridge 's ninth victory in ten years . Cambridge won the 51st Women 's Boat Race by four lengths in a time of 6 minutes and 12 seconds , their seventh victory in eight years .

= = Reaction = =

During the race , David Miller of the The Times claimed that Cambridge 's stroke James Ball " conducted a continual tactical conversation with Kevin Whyman , the Cambridge cox " . Miller suggested that while Oxford were the more powerful crew , Cambridge were technically superior .

Oxford coach Chuter concluded : " we did not find the cohesive and relaxed rhythm which we have had . " Her counterpart , Williams , exclaimed " you have got to be happy with that " .