

= The Boat Race 1949 =

The 95th Boat Race took place on 26 March 1949 . 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 in London . The race , umpired by the former Oxford rower Guy Oliver Nickalls , was notable as the commentator for the BBC , John Snagge announced " I can 't see who 's in the lead , but it 's either Oxford or Cambridge . " Cambridge won by a quarter of a length , the narrowest margin of victory since the 1877 race which was officially recorded as a dead heat . The victory took the overall record in the event to 51 ? 43 in their favour .

= = 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 ; it is followed throughout the United Kingdom and , as of 2014 , broadcast worldwide . Cambridge went into the race as reigning champions , having won the 1948 race by five lengths , with Cambridge leading overall with 50 victories to Oxford 's 43 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) .

Cambridge were coached by R. Beesly (who had rowed for the Light Blues in the 1927 , 1928 and 1929 races) , W. L. S. Flemming , Mike Nicholson (non @-@ rowing boat club president for the 1947 race) , Harold Rickett (who had rowed three times between 1930 and 1932) , and M. H. Warriner (a three @-@ time Blue between 1928 and 1930) . Oxford 's coaches were Hugh " Jumbo " Edwards (who had rowed for Oxford in 1926 and 1930) , F. E. Hellyer (who had coached Cambridge on five previous occasions) , A. McCulloch (who had rowed in the 1908 race) and J. MacNabb (who had coached Cambridge between 1930 and 1932) . The race was umpired by Guy Oliver Nickalls who had rowed for Oxford in the 1921 , 1922 and 1923 races .

Writing in The Observer , G. I. F. Thomson noted that " neither crew contains an oarsman of any exceptional power , distinction or reputation " yet both crews had improved in form since their arrival at Putney . The rowing correspondent for The Manchester Guardian praised the quality of the final coaching on the Thames , and stated that " there has been no threat of influenza , and no last @-@ minute change in the constitution of either crew " . He went on to claim that " Oxford should win " . The Times ' rowing correspondent suggested that the crews were " extraordinarily evenly matched " .

= = Crews = =

The Cambridge crew weighed an average of 12 st 10 @.@ 75 lb (80 @.@ 9 kg) , 2 pounds (0 @.@ 9 kg) per rower more than their opponents . Oxford 's crew contained five participants with prior Boat Race experience , including cox Alastair Palsgrave @-@ Brown . Cambridge saw one rower return to the crew in number five Paul Bircher . The Light Blue 's crew contained three Olympic medallists : Charles Lloyd , Bircher and Paul Massey won silver when they finished second in the men 's eights at the 1948 Summer Olympics in London .

= = Race = =

Oxford won the toss and elected to start from the Middlesex station , handing the Surrey side of the river to Cambridge . The umpire , Nickalls , started the race at 11 : 30 a.m. The Dark Blues took an early lead and were half a length ahead after the first minute of the race . They were clear of Cambridge by Craven Steps , and by the time the crews passed the Mile Post , were a length ahead . In the headwind along Chiswick Reach , and with the bend in the river in their favour , Cambridge slowly redressed the balance and by Chiswick Eyot they had begun to overlap Oxford 's boat .

By the bottom of Dukes Meadows , Oxford 's lead was down to half a length and as Cambridge out @-@ rated their opponents , they drew level and passed under Barnes Bridge side by side . Despite numerous spurts from Oxford 's stroke Davidge , Cambridge kept in touch and " were fighting every inch of the way " . Commentating for the BBC on a launch whose engine had failed , John Snagge announced " I can 't see who 's in the lead , but it 's either Oxford or Cambridge . " Both crews were rating over 33 strokes per minute as they approached the finishing post , with the Light Blues just edging ahead to win by a quarter of a length in a time of 18 minutes 57 seconds . The winning distance was the narrowest since the " dead heat " result of the 1877 Race . It was Cambridge 's third consecutive victory and took the overall record in the event to 51 ? 43 in their favour . The rowing correspondent for The Manchester Guardian suggested that this was a race that " will never be forgotten " , while the correspondent for The Times claimed that " 1949 must go down in Boat Race history as having provided one of the epic struggles of all time . " G. I. F. Thomson , writing in The Observer , stated that " heroic determination on both sides ... produced perhaps the most exciting Boat Race of all time . "