

= The Boat Race 1976 =

The 122nd Boat Race , an annual side @-@ by @-@ side rowing race between crews from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge along the River Thames , took place on 20 March 1976 and was won by Oxford by six @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths in 16 minutes 58 seconds , the fastest time in the history of the race . The race was umpired by former Cambridge rower Farn Carpmael . It was the first race in the event for which an official weigh @-@ in was held , and featured the heaviest rower ever in Steve Plunkett .

Oxford 's Isis won the 12th running of the reserve race against Cambridge 's Goldie , in a record time of 17 minutes 37 seconds . In the 31st Women 's Boat Race , Oxford defeated Cambridge .

= = 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 ") . The race was first held in 1829 , and since 1845 has taken place on the 4 @. @ 2 @-@ mile (6 @. @ 8 km) Championship Course on the River Thames in southwest London . The rivalry is a " hotly contested point of honour " between the two universities . Cambridge went into the race as reigning champions , having won the 1975 race by five @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths , and led overall with 68 victories to Oxford 's 52 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) . The umpire for the race was Farn Carpmael , who had rowed for Cambridge in 1930 and 1931 races .

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 .

By invitation from the Oxford boat club president Graham Innes , Oxford were coached by former Blue Dan Topolski while Cambridge were led by Czechoslovakian former international rower Bohumil Janousek (more commonly known as Bob Janousek) . Preparations during the week before the race were underwhelming for both crews . Oxford 's performance against a University of London crew was described by Jim Railton of The Times as " abysmal " while Cambridge " disgraced themselves " in a subsequent two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half @-@ length defeat by their own reserve crew , Goldie . Both crews had faced the " Lubrication Laboratory " crew from Imperial College London , a " hotbed of rowing " , in the lead @-@ up to the official race , but changes in personnel and differences in conditions and race lengths did not demonstrate a clear favourite .

The day before the race , British bookmaking company Ladbrokes announced that they would sponsor the race from the following year . From 1977 , each boat club would be awarded £ 10 @ , @ 000 and would compete for The Ladbroke Cup .

= = Crews = =

For the first time in the history of the event , an official weigh @-@ in was held , organised by The Sunday Times and weighing machine manufacturers W & T Avery Ltd . Oxford 's crew was the heaviest of all time , at an average of just under 14 st 1 lb (89 @. @ 0 kg) per rower , 4 @. @ 5 pounds (2 @. @ 0 kg) more than their opposition , and the first time in the race history , a crew weighed more than an average of 14 st (88 @. @ 7 kg) . The Dark Blue crew also included Steve Plunkett who , at 16 st 5 lb (103 @. @ 6 kg) was the heaviest rower in the history of the race . The Cambridge crew were inexperienced , their only Blue being the Cambridge University Boat Club president Henry Clay who had rowed in the 1975 race . In contrast , Oxford welcomed back five of their 1975 crew including cox Ashton Calvert , and also included two from the victorious 1975 Isis crew . Two non @-@ British rowers participated , Americans Dick Cashin (of Harvard) for Cambridge and Ken Brown (of Cornell) for Oxford .

= = Race = =

Oxford won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station . Leading from the outset , and in calm river conditions , Oxford were a length ahead within a minute . Four lengths up by the Mile Post , which they reached in a record 3 minutes 35 seconds , the Dark Blues reduced their rating . Further milestone records were broken at Hammersmith Bridge , Chiswick Steps and Barnes Bridge . Oxford reduced their rating but still extended their lead to six lengths by the finishing post , in a record @-@ breaking time of 16 minutes 58 seconds , 37 seconds quicker than their 1974 colleagues who had previously held the record . Although Cambridge also beat the existing record , they finished a distant 22 seconds and six @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths behind .

= = Reaction = =

Oxford coach Topolski said of his successful crew : " they got three [lengths] up , then they really sat on it and cruised . The enjoyed the row . It 's a natural thing when the other crew is so far behind . " He was critical of the Cambridge crew : " They didn 't really have a lot of talent . "

The official winning distance caused controversy . A discrepancy between the official margin (six @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths) and those reported in various British newspapers , including The Sunday Times , The Daily Telegraph and The Times resulted in a delay in bookmakers paying out on winning bets .