

= The Boat Race 1952 =

The 98th Boat Race took place on 29 March 1952 . 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 a race umpired by former Cambridge rower Kenneth Payne , Oxford won by a canvas in a time of 20 minutes 23 seconds . At no point during the contest was there clear water between the boats . The race , described as " one of the closest fought of all time " , was their second win in seven years and took the overall record in the event to 53 ? 44 in Cambridge 's 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 1951 race by a three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths , and had won the previous five races . They led overall with 53 victories to Oxford 's 43 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) .

Oxford 's coaches were A. J. M. Durand (who had rowed for the Dark Blues in the 1920 race) , Hugh " Jumbo " Edwards (who rowed for Oxford in 1926 and 1930) , R. D. Hill (who rowed in the 1940 wartime race) and J. H. Page . Cambridge were coached by C. B. M. Lloyd (three @-@ time Blue between 1949 and 1951) , Roy Meldrum (a coach for Lady Margaret Boat Club) , James Owen and Harold Rickett (who rowed three times between 1930 and 1932) . The race was umpired for the third time by the former British Olympian Kenneth Payne , who had rowed for Cambridge in the 1932 and 1934 races .

Although Cambridge had arrived at Putney as clear favourites to win , Oxford 's improvements during the build @-@ up to the race had shortened their odds : as the rowing correspondent in The Manchester Guardian suggested , " anything might happen " . The rowing correspondent for the The Times reported that Cambridge were " quoted as even " but would " still start [the] race as favourites " . Moreover , the crews were " extraordinarily evenly matched , but Oxford have a very good chance of breaking the run of Cambridge wins . "

= = Crews = =

The Cambridge crew weighed an average of 12 st 11 @.@ 5 lb (81 @.@ 2 kg) , 2 @.@ 5 pounds (1 @.@ 1 kg) per rower more than their opponents . Oxford 's crew contained three rowers with Boat Race experience including their stroke Chris Davidge who was making his third appearance in the event . Cambridge saw three participants return , including cox John Hinde . Oxford 's number six Ken Keniston was the only participant registered as non @-@ British ; the former Harvard University rower was from the United States .

= = Race = =

Cambridge won the toss and elected to start from the Middlesex station , handing the Surrey side of the river to Oxford . The weather was inclement , with gale @-@ force winds and snow disrupting the race , and limiting the number of spectators lining the banks of the Thames to a few thousand . Umpire Payne started the race at 3 : 15 p.m. Cambridge made the cleaner start in the rough conditions , and held a quarter @-@ length lead at the Dukes ' Head pub . Despite making a number of spurts , the Light Blues could not pull away from Oxford , the Dark Blues ' stroke maintaining a higher stroke rate to keep in touch . Keeping to more sheltered conditions yet in

slower water , Cambridge passed the Mile Post with a lead of half a length .

With the bend in the river beginning to favour Oxford , the lead was slowly eroded until both boats passed nearly level below Hammersmith Bridge . Alongside Chiswick Eyot , the Dark Blues were almost half a length ahead but not gaining further . Cambridge 's cox Hinde pushed the Oxford boat towards the centre of the river and as they passed under Barnes Bridge the Dark Blue lead was down to less than a quarter of a length . Oxford won by a canvas (approximately 9 feet (2.7 m)) in a time of 20 minutes 23 seconds , the narrowest margin of victory since 1877 , and their first win in six attempts . At no point during the course of the race did either boat have a clear water advantage over their opponent . The rowing correspondent for The Manchester Guardian described the race as " one of the closest fought of all time " , while Ian Thomson , writing in The Observer suggested it was " one of the most exciting races ever rowed . "