

= The Boat Race 1961 =

The 107th Boat Race took place on 1 April 1961 . 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 . The race which was delayed , the lead changed hands several times and an Oxford rower slumped and nearly fell out of the boat . It was won by Cambridge by four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ quarter lengths in a time of 19 minutes 22 seconds .

= 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 . Oxford went into the race as reigning champions , having won the 1960 race by one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ quarter lengths , while Cambridge led overall with 58 victories to Oxford 's 47 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) . Cambridge had not lost three consecutive races since the 1913 race .

Cambridge 's coaches included J. R. F. Best , James Crowden (who rowed for the Light Blues in the 1951 and 1952 races) , Derek Mays @-@ Smith (who rowed in the 1955 and 1956 races) , J. R. Owen (1959 and 1960 races) and J. J. Vernon (who rowed in the 1955 race) . Oxford 's coaching team comprised Jumbo Edwards (who rowed for Oxford in 1926 and 1930) , J. L. Fage (an Oxford Blue in 1958 and 1959) and L. A. F. Stokes (who rowed for the Dark Blues in the 1951 and 1952 races) . Oxford opted to row with 13 @-@ foot (4 @. @ 0 m) long oars , 1 foot (0 @. @ 3 m) longer than Cambridge 's . Cambridge arrived at Putney with a reputation for speed over short distances and " potentially dangerous challengers " . Meanwhile Oxford were anticipated to be " exceptionally strong " yet on occasion their rowing appeared to be " laborious " , with some commentators blaming the longer oars .

The race was umpired by George Douglas " Jock " Clapperton who had coxed Oxford in the 1923 and 1924 races as well as umpiring in the 1959 boat race . He was accompanied in the umpire 's boat by Antony Armstrong @-@ Jones , husband of Princess Margaret , who had coxed Cambridge to victory in the 1950 race .

= Crews =

The Oxford crew weighed an average of 12 st 12 lb (81 @. @ 4 kg) , 1 pound (0 @. @ 5 kg) per rower more than their opponents . Cambridge 's crew contained two former Blues , cox Roger Weston and rower John Beveridge who was making his third appearance in the event . Oxford saw five members of the previous year 's race return . There were three non @-@ British participants registered in the race : Oxford 's number three , John Sewell and Cambridge 's Mike Christian and Mark Hoffman were all from the United States . The latter pair had both captained the boat club at Harvard University .

= Race =

Oxford , the pre @-@ race favourites , won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station , handing the Middlesex side of the river to Cambridge . The race commenced at 2.35pm , delayed by more than 20 minutes as a result of a drifting stake boat , with Cambridge taking an early but brief lead . After the first minute , Oxford led by a few feet and increased their advantage to half a length by Craven Steps . At Craven Cottage , Cambridge spurted and retook the lead , but Oxford counterattacked and edged ahead . With the advantage of the bend in the river , Cambridge drew level by the Mile Post . The Dark Blues once again took the lead , and by Hammersmith Bridge were

four seconds ahead and held a clear water advantage . Rowing into a headwind , Oxford began to lose their shape and by Chiswick Eyot , Cambridge had reduced the deficit enough to overlap the Dark Blue boat , although Oxford still led by a length at Chiswick Steps .

Twelve minutes into the race , the Oxford number six , Graham Cooper , " turned pale and slumped " , disrupting the Oxford rhythm . Although he appeared to recover , " the cohesion had gone " . Cambridge overtook the Dark Blue boat and were three lengths ahead by Barnes Bridge , and passed the finishing post with a four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half length advantage in a time of 19 minutes 22 seconds , the slowest since the 1954 race . It was Cambridge 's first victory in three years and their largest winning margin since the 1955 race .

The rowing correspondent for The Times suggested that " for Oxford it was a sad day , and for Cooper a tragedy " , while for Cambridge it was " a splendid victory " . Cambridge 's stroke Hoffman said " it was a tough race ... but when I saw that one of the Oxford crew was in distress , I knew we could not help winning . " It was the third time since the war that Oxford had lost the event as a result of a crew member collapsing mid @-@ race . Oxford 's bow Richard Bate confessed that he " didn 't even know anything had been wrong until after the race . I only knew we were not at our best . "