

= The Boat Race 1899 =

The 55th Boat Race took place on 25 March 1899 . 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 . Cambridge won , their first success in a decade , by three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ quarter lengths in a time of 21 minutes 4 seconds . The victory took the overall record in the event to 32 ? 23 in Oxford '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 " ) . 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 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 1898 race " easily " , with Cambridge leading overall with 32 victories to Cambridge 's 22 ( excluding the " dead heat " of 1877 ) .

Oxford 's coaches were G. C. Bourne who had rowed for Oxford in the 1882 and 1883 races , Douglas McLean ( an Oxford Blue five times between 1883 and 1887 ) and R. P. Rowe ( who rowed for Oxford four times between 1889 and 1892 ) . Cambridge were coached by William Fletcher , Oxford Blue and R. C. Lehmann , the former president of the Cambridge Union Society and captain of the 1st Trinity Boat Club ( although he had rowed in the trials eights for Cambridge , he was never selected for the Blue boat ) . The umpire for the race for the tenth year in a row was Frank Willan who won the event four consecutive times , rowing for Oxford in the 1866 , 1867 , 1868 and 1869 races .

= = Crews = =

The Oxford crew weighed an average of 12 st 5 lb ( 78 @. @ 3 kg ) , 0 @. @ 5 pounds ( 0 @. @ 23 kg ) per rower more than their opponents . Cambridge saw three rowers with Boat Race experience return , in Claude Goldie , former Boat Club president William Dudley Ward and Raymond Broadly Etherington @-@ Smith . Oxford 's crew contained four former Blues , including Harcourt Gilbey Gold who was rowing at stroke for the fourth consecutive year . All but one of the Oxford crew were educated at Eton College ; Cambridge 's crew contained five Old Etonians . Australian rower Noel Leonard Coward was the only participant in the race registered as non @-@ British . C. E. Johnston of Oxford was the father of Brian Johnston , the cricket broadcaster , who , eighty @-@ two years later , would become the BBC 's principal boat @-@ race commentator .

= = Race = =

Cambridge won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station , handing the Middlesex side of the river to Oxford . The weather on the day of the race was good , but the tide was poor . Willan got the race underway at 12 : 58 p.m. and the crews remained reasonably level until the Mile Post , where Oxford held a quarter of a length lead . Cambridge began to reduce the deficit , so Oxford stroke Gold increased the rate in an attempt to make the most of the favourable bend in the river . The spurt had little effect , and the Light Blue stroke John Houghton Gibbon responded in kind with a burst of his own .

The Cambridge boat drew away quickly and were well ahead by The Doves pub , allowing them " to take matters fairly easily over the latter part of the course " . Cambridge won by three and a quarter lengths in a time of 21 minutes and 4 seconds . It was their first victory in ten years and took the overall record to 32 ? 23 in Oxford 's favour . Author and former Oxford rower George Drinkwater remarked that " Cambridge were definitely the better crew " and noted that their effort was all the

more impressive as number four John Ernest Payne had been struck down by influenza just a day before the race .