

= The Boat Race 1898 =

The 55th Boat Race took place on 24 March 1898 . 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 . Oxford , the reigning champions and leading overall , went into the race with a marginally heavier crew than Cambridge . They won " easily " as Cambridge 's boat became waterlogged in strong winds and inclement conditions . It was their ninth consecutive victory and took them to an overall lead of 32 ? 22 in the event . The winning time of 22 minutes 15 seconds was the slowest since the 1878 race .

= = 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 1897 race by two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths , with Cambridge leading overall with 31 victories to Cambridge 's 22 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) .

Oxford were coached by G. C. Bourne who had rowed for Oxford in the 1882 and 1883 races and Douglas McLean (an Oxford Blue five times between 1883 and 1887) . Cambridge 's president , William Dudley Ward , despite opposition , invited William Fletcher , Oxford Blue and former coach , to assist in teaching his crew the style required to challenge the Dark Blues . Several members of the Light Blue crew refused to row , and Dudley Ward himself was refused leave to row on grounds of sickness . According to George Drinkwater , former rower and author , " Fletcher turned out a crew well above the average of previous years . " Conversely , Oxford " did not develop as it should have done " and was " by no means up to the average of those that went before it . "

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 7 lb (79 @.@ 2 kg) , 0 @.@ 5 pounds (0 @.@ 2 kg) per rower more than their opponents . Cambridge 's crew contained two participants with Boat Race experience : Adam Searle Bell who was rowing in his fourth contest and cox Edward Caesar Hawkins steering in his second appearance . Claude Goldie , son of John rowed at number seven for the Light Blues . Oxford saw six members of the previous crew return , including Charles Burnell and R. Carr , both of whom were making their fourth consecutive appearance in the race . Eight of the nine crew Oxford crew had studied at Eton College . R. O. Pitman , rowing at bow for Oxford , was the third of his siblings to participate in the Boat Race , with his brothers Frederick I. Pitman rowing for Cambridge between 1884 and 1886 and C. M. Pitman who rowed for Oxford between 1892 and 1895 .

= = Race = =

According to author and former Oxford rower George Drinkwater , " there was a gale blowing ... which met a spring tide , so that the water was very rough from the start . " Oxford , the slight pre @-@ race favourites , won the toss and elected to start from the Middlesex station , handing the rougher Surrey side of the river to Cambridge . Willan started the race at 3 : 47 p.m. but within four strokes , the Cambridge boat was " half @-@ full of water " .

Oxford steered towards the shore for shelter , with Cambridge following , but they had taken on so much water that " only the bladders which had been placed under their seats kept them afloat " .

Although the Dark Blues had shipped a fair amount of water , they were able to continue , and with Cambridge waterlogged , the race was effectively ended as a contest . Oxford won " easily " , to secure their ninth consecutive victory in the slowest winning time since the 1878 race .