

## = The Boat Race 1896 =

The 53rd Boat Race took place on 28 March 1896 . The Boat Race is an annual side @-@ by @-@ side rowing race between crews from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge along the River Thames . In a race umpired by former rower Frank Willan , Oxford won by two @-@ fifths of a length in a time of 20 minutes 1 second , taking the overall record in the event to 30 ? 22 in their favour . It was their seventh consecutive victory and the narrowest winning margin since 1877 .

## = = Background = =

The Boat Race is a side @-@ by @-@ side rowing competition between the boat clubs of 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 , as of 2014 it is followed throughout the United Kingdom and broadcast worldwide . Oxford went into the race as reigning champions , having beaten Cambridge by two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ quarter lengths in the previous year 's race , and held the overall lead , with 29 victories to Cambridge 's 22 .

Oxford 's coaches were G. C. Bourne who had rowed for Oxford in the 1882 and 1883 races , 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 ) and Douglas McLean ( an Oxford Blue five times between 1883 and 1887 ) . Cambridge were coached by Stanley Muttelbury who had rowed for Cambridge five times between the 1886 and 1890 races . The umpire for the race for the eighth 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 6 @.@ 5 lb ( 79 @.@ 0 kg ) , 1 pound ( 0 @.@ 5 kg ) per rower more than their opponents . Five of the Cambridge crew had rowed in the previous year 's race : boat club president Theodore Byram Hope , Herbert Aylward Game , Richard Yerburch Bonsey , Thomas Jones Gibb Duncanson and Adam Searle Bell . The Oxford crew contained three former Blues , including Walter Erskine Crum who was making his third consecutive appearance in the event . Six of the Oxford crew and two Cantabrigians were educated at Eton College .

## = = Race = =

Cambridge , the pre @-@ race favourites , won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station , handing the Middlesex side of the river to Oxford . Starting at 1 : 03 p.m. , the race was conducted in strong westerly winds and rain showers . Cambridge started the faster of the crews and outrated Oxford by two strokes per minute , and by Craven Steps ( approximately 1 @.@ 000 yards ( 910 m ) ) along the course ) they held a one @-@ third length lead . With the bend in the river in their favour , Oxford drew level by the Mile Post , but by Harrods Furniture Depository Cambridge were ahead , holding a three @-@ quarter length advantage by Hammersmith Bridge . Into the rough water past the bridge , Oxford struggled and the Light Blues were clear at The Doves pub . By Chiswick Steps they had extended the lead to one and a half lengths .

Despite being behind for most of the race , the Oxford stroke Harcourt Gilbey Gold maintained his crew 's pace and rhythm and along Corney Reach ( around 3 miles ( 4 @.@ 8 km ) into the race ) they were overlapping the Light Blue boat . Encountering a challenging combination of wind and tide , Cambridge began to struggle by the brewery at Mortlake , and the Dark Blues took advantage , overtaking Cambridge and passed the finishing post two @-@ fifths of a length ahead in a time of 20 minutes 1 second . It was their seventh consecutive victory and the narrowest margin of victory

since the 1877 race . Author and former Oxford rower George Drinkwater described the race as " one of the most stubbornly contested that has ever been rowed " .