

= The Boat Race 1953 =

The 99th Boat Race took place on 28 March 1953 . 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 , in which the Oxford crew was slightly heavier than their opponents , was umpired by former rower Gerald Ellison . Cambridge won by eight lengths in a time of 19 minutes 54 seconds . It was their sixth win in seven years and took the overall record in the event to 54 ? 44 in their 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 . Oxford went into the race as reigning champions , having won the 1952 race by a canvas , with Cambridge leading overall with 53 victories to Oxford 's 44 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) .

Cambridge were coached by James Crowden (who had represented Cambridge in the 1951 and 1952 races) , David Jennens (who rowed three times between 1949 and 1951) , Roy Meldrum (a coach for Lady Margaret Boat Club) and R. H. H. Symonds (who had rowed in the 1931 race) . 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 . The race was umpired for the second time by former Oxford rower and Bishop of Willesden Gerald Ellison .

In the build @-@ up to the race , opinions were divided on which crew was favourite to win . According to the rowing correspondent of The Manchester Guardian , upon arrival at Putney , Oxford demonstrated " great superiority " over Cambridge , yet the Light Blues had improved , and had " the pace , if not the form , to win " . The Times had declared " Oxford the stronger crew " on the day of the race . Queen Mary had died four days prior to the race ; the coxes wore black armbands and the flag post on the umpire 's launch was draped in black as marks of respect . The umpire was accompanied on his launch by the Chancellor of the University of Cambridge Lord Tedder .

= = Crews = =

The Oxford crew weighed an average of 12 st 13 lb (81 @.@ 9 kg) , 3 pounds (1 @.@ 4 kg) per rower more than their opponents . Cambridge saw two rowers return to their crew : J. S. M. Jones at number two and G. T. Marshall at number four . Oxford 's crew contained three rowers with Boat Race experience : A. J. Smith , M. L. Thomas and H. M. C. Quick . Two of the participants in the race were registered as non @-@ British : Oxford 's Smith was Australian while Cambridge 's L. B. McCagg was from the United States . The rowing correspondent for The Times described Oxford 's crew as containing " no outstanding individuals " yet " no weak links " . Conversely , Cambridge 's crew was " variable " in quality but in former Harvard University rower Louis McCagg , they had the " outstanding oarsman in either crew " .

= = Race = =

Cambridge won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station , handing the Middlesex side of the river to Oxford . On a poor tide and in a strong south @-@ westerly wind , umpire Ellison started the race at 12 noon . Both crews rated 36 for the first minute , after which the Light Blues held a quarter @-@ length lead . Passing Beverley Brook , the bend in the river began to favour Oxford but

Cambridge continued to pull away and were clear by a length as the crews passed the Mile Post . They increased the lead by a further half @-@ length as they passed the Crab Tree pub , and although Oxford made several bursts , they passed below Hammersmith Bridge six seconds behind the Light Blues , and fell in behind them , the " first visible gesture of despair " according to The Manchester Guardian 's rowing correspondent .

Pushing away from the bridge , Oxford stayed in touch with Cambridge for a brief period , although could not reduce their lead . Rowing into rough water towards Chiswick Eyot , Cambridge moved across to seek shelter closer to the Surrey shore , while Oxford continued in the difficult conditions . A lead of 14 seconds by Chiswick Steps was calmly extended to 20 seconds by the time the crews passed below Barnes Bridge . Cambridge won by eight lengths in a time of 19 minutes 54 seconds , a time which " could have been shortened by at least half a minute had the winners been pressed " . It was their sixth victory in the past seven and the fastest winning time since the 1949 race . The rowing correspondent for The Times described the result as a " spectacular reversal of form " having failed to show the pace they demonstrated in practice .