

## = The Boat Race 1950 =

The 96th Boat Race took place on 1 April 1950 . 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 Cambridge crew contained three Olympic silver medallists from the 1948 Summer Olympics ; six of their crew rowed for Lady Margaret Boat Club . In a race umpired by the Olympic medallist and former Cantabrigian rower Kenneth Payne , Cambridge won by three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths in a time of 20 minutes 15 seconds , taking the overall record in the event to 52 ? 43 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 . Cambridge went into the race as reigning champions , having won the 1949 race by a quarter of a length , with Cambridge leading overall with 51 victories to Oxford 's 43 ( excluding the " dead heat " of 1877 ) .

Cambridge were coached by R. Beesly ( who had rowed for the Light Blues in the 1927 , 1928 and 1929 races ) , Roy Meldrum ( a coach for Lady Margaret Boat Club ) , Mike Nicholson ( non @-@ rowing boat club president for the 1947 race ) , Harold Rickett ( who rowed three times between 1930 and 1932 ) and R. H. H. Symonds ( who had rowed in the 1931 race ) . Oxford 's coaches were T. A. Brocklebank ( who had rowed for Cambridge three times between 1929 and 1931 and who had also coached the Light Blues in the 1934 race ) , R. E. Eason ( a Dark Blue in the 1924 race ) , Hugh " Jumbo " Edwards ( who rowed for Oxford in 1926 and 1930 ) and J. A. MacNabb ( who rowed for Cambridge in the 1924 race ) . The race was umpired for the second time by the former British Olympian Kenneth Payne , who had rowed for Cambridge in the 1932 and 1934 races .

The Light Blues were initially considered " hot favourites " and were described by the rowing correspondent of The Manchester Guardian as " full of brilliant promise " while Oxford were " a collection of competent oarsmen who had to be moulded into a crew " . The Observer 's G. I. F. Thomson suggested that " it is anyone 's race " .

## = = Crews = =

The Cambridge crew weighed an average of 12 st 8 @.@ 25 lb ( 79 @.@ 8 kg ) , 4 @.@ 75 pounds ( 2 @.@ 2 kg ) per rower more than their opponents . Oxford saw three rowers return to the boat with experience of the event , including number five G. C. Fisk who was rowing in his third consecutive Boat Race . Cambridge 's crew contained five rowers who had taken part in the Boat Race previously , including Paul Bircher who was also making his third appearance in the race . Four of the participants in the race were registered as non @-@ British , two in each crew . Oxford 's Fisk and Calvert came from Australia , as did Cambridge 's Charles Lloyd , while Light Blue W. T. Arthur was South African .

The Cambridge crew contained three rowers who had won silver medals at the 1948 Summer Olympics : Paul Massey , Bircher and Lloyd were in the crew that came second in the men 's eight in London . Chris Davidge , the Oxford University Boat Club president , was forced to drop out of the race through illness . Five of the Oxford rowers were educated at Eton College ; six of the Cambridge rowers were studying at St John 's College and so rowed for Lady Margaret Boat Club .

## = = Race = =

Oxford won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station , handing the Middlesex side of the river to Cambridge . Umpire Payne started the race at 12 : 30 p.m. , with the Dark Blues making a slightly faster start ; after a minute they were about a canvas @-@ length ahead of their opponents . Although having the outside of the first bend , they had extended their lead to a quarter of a length by Craven Cottage . By the time the crews passed the Mile Post , Cambridge were leading by a quarter @-@ length which they extended to half a length by Harrods Furniture Depository . Cambridge 's stroke Crick increased his crew 's rate ; his opposite number Cavenagh responded to prevent the Light Blues going clear .

While the conditions were not too rough , both crews slowed their stroke rate , with Cambridge passing below Hammersmith Bridge still half a length ahead . As they passed The Doves pub , Oxford slowly began to gain , rating marginally higher . Cavenagh pushed on again before Chiswick Eyot but could not prevent the Light Blues extending their lead to nearly a length by the time the crews passed Chiswick Steps . Despite further spurts from Oxford , Cambridge 's " better stride " saw them pass below Barnes Bridge two and a half lengths ahead . Cambridge passed the finishing post leading by three and a half lengths in a time of 20 minutes 15 seconds , their fourth consecutive win in the slowest time since the 1947 race . The victory took the overall record in the event to 52 ? 43 in their favour . The rowing correspondent for The Times noted that " Cambridge rowed far better than they have recently " while " Oxford surpassed what anyone could reasonably have expected from them . " The Manchester Guardian 's rowing correspondent declared that Cambridge 's crew was " generally acknowledged to be one of the best seen on the tideway " , and that " Oxford could not , short of shipwreck or piracy , win the race " . Writing in The Observer , G. I. F. Thomson noted of Cambridge that " all through practice they had shown more promising form and power , as well as unity " while Oxford had " made great strides ... and were never out of the running . "