

= The Boat Race 1978 =

The 124th Boat Race between crews from the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge took place on the River Thames on 25 March 1978 . Umpired by former Cambridge rower James Crowden , Oxford won in a time of 18 minutes and 58 seconds . The race was complicated by bad weather , and when faced with choppy water , a strong headwind and horizontal , driving rain , the Cambridge boat , which lacked splashboards , took on water and sank . It was the fifth time a boat had sunk during the event .

In the reserve race , Cambridge 's Goldie beat Oxford 's Isis by one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ quarter lengths . Cambridge won the 33rd Women 's Boat Race .

= = Background = =

The Boat Race is a side @-@ by @-@ side rowing competition between the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge . First held in 1829 , the competition is a 4 @.@ 2 @-@ mile (6 @.@ 8 km) race along the River Thames in southwest London . The rivalry is a major point of honour between the two universities and is followed throughout the United Kingdom and worldwide . Oxford went into the race as reigning champions , having won the 1977 race by seven lengths , with Cambridge leading overall with 68 victories to Oxford 's 54 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) . The 1978 race was sponsored by Ladbrokes , while the BBC had paid between £ 10 @,@ 000 and £ 20 @,@ 000 to televise the event .

During training for the race , Oxford had sunk , taking on water in the inclement weather , and had decided to fit splashboards to their boat , while Cambridge opted to leave their boat unchanged . Prior to this year 's event , there had been four sinkings in the history of the race . Cambridge sank in 1859 , Oxford sank in 1925 and 1951 , and both crews sank in 1912 .

The first Women 's Boat Race took place in 1927 , but did not become an annual fixture until the 1960s . Up until 2014 , the contest was conducted as part of the Henley Boat Races , but as of the 2015 race , it is held on the River Thames , on the same day as the men 's main and reserve races . The reserve race , contested between Oxford 's Isis boat and Cambridge 's Goldie boat has been held since 1965 . It usually takes place on the Tideway , prior to the main Boat Race .

= = Crews = =

Oxford 's crew contained three Old Blues in Moran , Shealy and Michelmores , while Cambridge 's boat featured five returning rowers in Bathurst , Clegg , Horton , Ross and Cooke @-@ Yarborough . The race also marked the debut of Boris Rankov , who went on to represent Oxford in five further races . The Cambridge crew was marginally heavier per rower , averaging 1 @.@ 5 pounds (0 @.@ 68 kg) more than Oxford .

= = Race description = =

Oxford won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station . After a false start , the race commenced at 2.45pm in reasonable weather conditions , and Oxford took a one @-@ length lead to Hammersmith Bridge in a record time of 6 minutes 24 seconds . As the crews turned into the Surrey bend , conditions drastically worsened with a strong headwind and " horizontal rain driving into them " . Entering choppy water and in an attempt to push past Oxford , Cambridge made their challenge at Barnes Bridge but began to take on water . Within seconds the boat started to sink ; the Oxford crew realised the contest was over and rowed carefully to the finish in a time of 18 minutes 58 seconds . It was Oxford 's third victory in a row , and their fourth in the past five years .

In the reserve race , Cambridge 's Goldie beat Oxford 's Isis by one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ quarter lengths , and in the 33rd running of the Women 's Boat Race , Cambridge also triumphed .

= = Reaction = =

Cambridge boat club president Mark Horton immediately challenged the Oxford president Andy Michelmore to a re @-@ row ; the challenge was declined . Horton recalls " It was hard to take and is still a painful memory . The Boat Race was supposed to be one of the proudest moments of my life " . Cambridge 's Mark Bathurst was indignant about the preparation of the boat : " we had taken to the water without fitting any [splashboards] ? an act of monumental idiocy " . Oxford cox Fail told The Guardian " I was surprised when I heard that Cambridge had sunk . If you keep going steadily you forget about water and ride it out . "

Cambridge 's sinking was featured as the 79th in Channel 4 's 100 Greatest Sporting Moments .