

## = The Boat Race 1981 =

The 127th Boat Race took place on 4 April 1981 . 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 . Umpired by former Oxford rower Ronnie Howard , it was won by Oxford who passed the finishing post eight lengths ahead of Cambridge , their largest margin of victory since 1898 . The race saw Oxford coxed by Sue Brown , the first female cox in the history of the event .

In the reserve race , Isis beat Goldie by four @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths , and in the Women 's Boat Race , Oxford were victorious .

## = = 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 miles ( 6 @. @ 8 km ) Championship Course on the River Thames in southwest London . The rivalry is a major point of honour between the two universities and followed throughout the United Kingdom and broadcast worldwide . Oxford went into the race as reigning champions , having beaten Cambridge by a canvas in the previous year 's race . However Cambridge held the overall lead , with 68 victories to Oxford 's 57 . The race was sponsored for fifth time by Ladbrokes .

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 .

Christopher Dodd writing in The Guardian noted Oxford 's aggressiveness during the preparations for the race , suggesting that they were " set to humiliate their opponents if they possibly can . " Dodd went on to predict that Oxford would win by their greatest margin since the 1898 race . Meanwhile , Cambridge had reorganised their seating order the week before the race . Oxford 's boat was named after Russell Crockford who had rowed in Oxford 's successful 1978 and 1979 races . He was killed in a car accident the previous year on his way to a regatta in Australia .

Umpire Ronnie Howard modified the starting arrangements , making the boats commence the race closer together to dissuade the coxes steering into one another from the start . He warned both coxes that should they foul , he would disqualify them .

## = = Crews = =

Sue Brown was selected to cox the Oxford boat , and became the first female competitor in the history of the Boat Race . Although she had learned to cox at Wadham , she had already been selected to represent Great Britain in the Women 's coxed fours at the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow . She had impressed Oxford coach Dan Topolski who chose her for the Dark Blues . Her selection caused a furore ; according to Dodd , " Sue Brown must have passed before more shutters than anyone except for Lady Diana Spencer " . She was advised by Colin Moynihan who had coxed Oxford to their largest victory of the century in the 1977 race . Boris Rankov was making his fourth appearance , but this time as a junior fellow of St Hugh 's , rather than as an undergraduate at Corpus Christi . In doing so , he became the first representative of a women 's college in the men 's Boat Race .

The Oxford crew weighed an average of 13 st 8 lb ( 86 @. @ 0 kg ) , 1 @. @ 5 pounds ( 0 @. @ 68 kg ) more per rower than their opponents . The race saw the return of no fewer than twelve former Blues , six in each crew . Only Richard Yonge , Richard Emerton and Brown for Oxford and R. Stephens , M. Clark and Mike Cowie for Cambridge were new to the race . Graeme Hall was the Cambridge finishing coach , while Oxford 's Dan Topolski took over that role from Steve Royle two weeks prior to the race .

= = Race = =

Oxford were strong pre @-@ race favourites ; Ladbrokes themselves quoted Oxford at odds of five @-@ to @-@ one on to win . Cambridge won the toss for the first time in seven years and elected to start on the Surrey station . The race started at 1 pm under umpire Howard 's guidance . Both crews rating equally off the start , Oxford took an early lead and lead by nine seconds by the Mile Post , allowing her to move the Dark Blue boat in front of Cambridge . Pushing her crew to outrate Cambridge , Oxford extended their lead to 10 seconds by Hammersmith Bridge , 14 seconds by Chiswick Steps , 18 seconds by Barnes Bridge and 23 seconds by the finishing post . Oxford won their sixth consecutive victory by eight lengths in a time of 18 minutes 11 seconds , the largest margin of victory since the Cambridge won the 1973 race by thirteen lengths , and the largest margin of victory in the 20th century for the Dark Blues .

In the reserve race , Isis beat Goldie by five lengths , their second consecutive victory . In the 36th running of the Women 's Boat Race , Oxford triumphed , their second consecutive victory .

= = Reaction = =

Oxford cox Brown avoided the traditional soaking in the Thames . She later commented : " I steered extremely badly , but we still won . " Her coach Topolski said " She did a brilliant job . " Dodd , writing in The Guardian , described Oxford 's victory as " crushing " following their " undramatic and calculated performance " . Jim Railton of The Times was impressed : " Without a doubt it is one of the finest crews Oxford have ever produced , arguably the best . "