

= The Boat Race 1997 =

The 143rd Boat Race between crews from the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge took place on the River Thames on 29 March 1997 . Umpired by former Oxford rower Tom Cadoux @-@ Hudson , Cambridge won in a time of 17 minutes and 38 seconds .

In the reserve race , Cambridge 's Goldie beat Oxford 's Isis by six @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths . Cambridge won the 52nd 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 followed throughout the United Kingdom and worldwide . Cambridge went into the race as reigning champions , having won the 1996 race by two @-@ and @-@ three @-@ quarter lengths , and led overall with 73 victories to Oxford 's 68 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) . The race was the last to be sponsored by Beefeater Gin .

The first Women 's Boat Race took place in 1927 , but did not become an annual fixture until the 1960s . 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 = =

The weigh @-@ in was held at the Hurlingham Club on 24 March 1997 . The Cambridge crew , pre @-@ race favourites , weighed an average of 1 pound (0 @-@ 45 kg) more per rower than Oxford , with Cambridge 's Alex Story the heaviest man in the race at 16 stone (100 kg) . The crews were the tallest in the history of the race , with Cambridge averaging 6 ft 5 @-@ 25 in (1 @-@ 96 m) to Oxford 's 6 ft 4 @-@ 5 in (1 @-@ 94 m) . Oxford 's Roberto Blanda became the first Blue from Italy . Cambridge 's crew featured three former Blues , while Oxford 's crew contained none .

Cambridge were coached once again by Robin Williams , while Oxford were guided by Dutchman René Mijnders , who had led the Netherlands to Olympic gold in Atlanta in the men 's eight .

= = Race description = =

Oxford 's non @-@ rowing boat club president Ed Bellamy won the toss and selected the Surrey station as the starting point for his crew , Cambridge therefore started from the Middlesex station . Immediately from the start , Cambridge cox Kevin Whyman steered into the Oxford water , closing the lateral gap between the boats and securing a series of warnings from race umpire Tom Cadoux @-@ Hudson . Oxford held a lead of a few feet round the Fulham bend , but the crews were level at the mile post . By Hammersmith Bridge , Oxford had pulled away marginally to hold a one @-@ third length lead , but superior steering by Whyman around the Surrey bend pulled Cambridge back into contention , level by the Chiswick Steps , and a length ahead by Barnes Bridge . Moving across , Cambridge took Oxford 's clear water and passed the finishing post six seconds and two lengths ahead . It was Cambridge 's fourth consecutive victory and took the overall record to 74 ? 68 in their favour . By the end of the race , umpire Cadoux @-@ Hudson had issued 132 warnings to the crews .

In the reserve race , Cambridge 's Goldie beat Oxford 's Isis by six @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths , and in the 52nd running of the Women 's Boat Race , Cambridge also triumphed .

= = Reaction = =

Olympic gold medallist Steve Redgrave presented Cambridge with the Beefeater Trophy and both crews with their medals . Oxford 's coach Mijnders said " After the big bend , Cambridge were actually flying ... the further the race went on , the better Cambridge rowed " . Cambridge coach Williams noted " Some of our boys took some stick in the press , but they responded to the pressure and were brilliant . " Oxford 's stroke and Olympic bronze medallist Tim Foster told his crew " We 'll always remember we lost the Boat Race , but don 't forget we are still good rowers . " Cadoux @-@ Hudson stated in an interview that there were two occasions where the blades clashed : " Cambridge were being warned on one occasion and Oxford on the other , so I think it equalled out at the end . I don 't think it affected the outcome " .