

= The Boat Race 1956 =

The 102nd Boat Race took place on 24 March 1956 . 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 . In a race umpired by former rower Kenneth Payne , Cambridge won by one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ quarter lengths in a time of 18 minutes 36 seconds , the fourth quickest time in the history of the event . The victory took the overall record to 56 ? 45 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 1955 race by sixteen lengths , and led overall with 55 victories to Oxford 's 45 (excluding the " dead heat " of 1877) .

Cambridge were coached by H. H. Almond (who had rowed for the Light Blues twice , in the 1950 and 1951 races) , J. R. F. Best , C. B. M. Lloyd (three @-@ time Light Blue between 1949 and 1951) , J. R. Owen (who took part in the race in 1959 and 1960) and H. R. N. Rickett (who rowed three times between 1930 and 1932) . Oxford 's coaches were A. G. S. Bailey , T. R. M. Bristow , Hugh Edwards (who had rowed for Oxford in the 1926 and 1930 races) , P. Gladstone (who rowed in 1950 and 1952) and A. D. Rowe (who represented the Dark Blues in the 1948 and 1949 races) . The race was umpired for the fifth time by the former British Olympian Kenneth Payne , who had rowed for Cambridge in the 1932 and 1934 races .

Both crews experienced a reasonable build @-@ up to the race in favourable conditions . According to the rowing correspondent of The Times , Oxford made gains on Cambridge during this time , although he conceded " it is unlikely that Cambridge are , as yet , unduly worried about the future " .

= = Crews = =

The Cambridge crew weighed an average of 13 st 2 @.@ 5 lb (83 @.@ 5 kg) , 7 @.@ 5 pounds (3 @.@ 4 kg) per rower more than their opponents . Oxford 's crew had two rowers with Boat Race experience , including bow E. V. Vine and number two J. G. McLeod , both of whom were taking part in their third consecutive race . Similarly , Cambridge saw two participants return in M. G. Baynes and K. A. Masser (who was rowing in his third consecutive race) . Three of the race participants were registered as non @-@ British , all representing Oxford : Vine , McLeod and Roderick Carnegie were all Australian .

= = Race = =

Cambridge won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station , handing the Middlesex side of the river to Oxford . In a south @-@ easterly wind and drizzle , the race was started by umpire Kenneth Payne at 11 : 30 a.m. Oxford out @-@ rated their opposition for the first minute , averaging 40 strokes per minute to Cambridge 's 37 , yet after a minute the Light Blues held a half @-@ length lead . With the Dark Blues continuing to stroke faster , the deficit was reduced to a quarter @-@ length by Craven Steps , which was passed in record time . By the Mile Post , and despite pushes from Oxford , the Light Blues were about half a length ahead .

A spurt at Harrods Furniture Depository saw them gain an extra half @-@ length before they passed under Hammersmith Bridge a length and a half ahead of Oxford . Although the Dark Blues were on the outside of the long bend in the river , they kept in touch , and prevented Cambridge

from extending their lead . The Light Blues passed Chiswick Steps still with a length and a half lead as both crews faced a head wind going into Corney Reach . Along Dukes Meadow Cambridge started to tire and Oxford began to gain ; passing through the arches of Barnes Bridge , the Light Blues held a four @-@ second lead . Increasing their rate to 34 strokes per minute , Oxford 's stroke Mawer tried to pull them back into contention yet just as the boats began to overlap , Cambridge pushed on again to win by one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ quarter lengths in a time of 18 minutes 36 seconds . It was the fastest winning time since the 1934 race and the fourth fastest time in the history of the Boat Race , yet the narrowest winning margin since the 1952 race . It was the Light Blues ' second consecutive win , their third win in four years and took the overall record in the race to 56 ? 45 in their favour .

According to the rowing correspondent of The Times , it was " one of the greatest battles in the history of the race " . Cambridge 's boat club president Masser said " I cannot speak too highly Oxford 's magnificent row . We had planned to build up an early lead and then row clean away ... but hard as we tried we could not shake Oxford off our tail . "