

## = The Boat Race 1879 =

The 36th Boat Race took place on 5 April 1879 . The Boat Race is an annual side @-@ by @-@ side rowing race between crews from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge along the River Thames . Each crew contained four Blues . In a race umpired by former Oxford rower Joseph William Chitty , Cambridge led all the way , and won by a margin of three lengths in a time of 21 minutes 18 seconds . The victory took the overall record to 18 ? 17 in Oxford 's 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 " ) . The race was first held in 1829 , and since 1845 has taken place on the 4 @. @ 2 @-@ mile ( 6 @. @ 8 km ) Championship Course on the River Thames in southwest London . Cambridge went into the race as reigning champions having won the previous year 's race by ten lengths . However Oxford held the overall lead , with 18 victories to Cambridge 's 16 ( excluding the " dead heat " of 1877 ) .

Cambridge 's coaches were James Brooks Close ( who rowed for the Light Blues in the 1872 , 1873 and 1874 races ) , Herbert Edward Rhodes ( who took part in four races between 1873 and 1876 ) and Robert John Spurrell ( a Blue in 1878 ) . Oxford were coached by William Grenfell ( who had rowed for the Dark Blues in 1877 and was the non @-@ rowing president of Oxford University Boat Club ) .

The race was umpired by Joseph William Chitty who had rowed for Oxford twice in 1849 ( in the March and December races ) and the 1852 race , while the starter was Edward Searle .

## = = Crews = =

The Cambridge crew weighed an average of 12 st 0 @. @ 5 lb ( 76 @. @ 2 kg ) , 0 @. @ 75 pounds ( 0 @. @ 3 kg ) more than their opponents . Oxford 's crew contained four former Blues , including H. P. Marriott who was rowing in his fifth consecutive Boat Race . Similarly , Cambridge saw four Blues return to their crew , including cox George Latham Davies who was steering the Light Blue boat for the fifth time . Rower and author George Drinkwater stated that " neither of the crews this year was up to the high standard of the winning crews in the past few years " .

The Cambridge crew included the only non @-@ British participant in the race , Australian rower Charles Fairbairn . He was born in Victoria and was educated at Geelong Grammar School before matriculating at Jesus College .

## = = Race = =

Oxford won the toss and elected to start from the Surrey station , handing the Middlesex side of the river to Cambridge . Cambridge made the better start and were clear of Oxford within the first 90 seconds of the race . Despite a lower stroke rate , the Light Blues had extended their lead to three lengths by Hammersmith Bridge . Encountering rough water in Corney Reach , Cambridge slowed and allowed Oxford to gain on them , but as the crews passed under Barnes Bridge into smoother water , the Light Blues reasserted their dominance . They passed the finishing post three lengths ahead in a time of 21 minutes 18 seconds . It was Cambridge 's first victory since the 1876 race , and their seventh in the last ten races , taking the overall record to 18 ? 17 in Oxford 's favour .