

= The Boat Race 1980 =

The 126th Boat Race took place on 5 April 1980 . 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 . It was won by Oxford in the closest finish for a century , despite one of their oarsman collapsing before the end of the race .

In the reserve race , Isis beat Goldie by five 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 three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half lengths in the previous year 's race . However Cambridge held the overall lead , with 68 victories to Oxford 's 56 . The race was sponsored for fourth time by Ladbrokes . It was the last race to be commentated on BBC Radio by John Snagge .

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 .

Cambridge coach Graeme Hall was stroke for the Light Blues in the 1968 race , racing against Oxford coach Daniel Topolski who was bowman for the Dark Blues that year . Cambridge Boat Club president John Woodhouse noted : " We have cut down the number of formal dinners with old Blues and old coaches , and we have tried to keep the evenings quiet . "

= = Crews = =

The Oxford crew featured three Old Blues , Chris Mahoney , Mike Diserens , and Boris Rankov , who was rowing in his third University Boat Race . In J.S. Palmer and A.G. Phillips , Cambridge 's crew contained two Blues returning from the previous year 's race . Hugh Laurie was following the tradition of his father , former Light Blue president and Olympic gold medallist Ran , who had won the Boat Race in 1934 , 1935 and 1936 .

= = Race = =

Oxford won the toss and elected to start on the Surrey station . The race started at 4 @. @ 45 pm . Following a clash soon after the start , and another at Harrods , the crews were level . Despite Oxford 's number seven , Thomas Barry , losing part of his blade , his crew established a lead and defended it against a higher rating Cambridge . Umpire Alan Burrough allowed the race to continue , despite the clash and close steering . By Barnes Bridge , Oxford 's bowman , Steve Francis , son of author Dick Francis , was exhausted and " had more or less stopped rowing " . Cambridge 's push continued but Oxford passed the finishing post with a canvas ' advantage , the closest finish of the century . Francis was treated for exhaustion , but was later diagnosed with hepatitis .

In the reserve race , Isis beat Goldie by five lengths , their first victory in four years . In the 35th running of the Women 's Boat Race , Oxford triumphed , only their second victory in twenty years .

= = Reaction = =

It was the first time Oxford had won five consecutive races since 1913 and was the " closest finish since at least the turn of the century . " Laurie recalls his attempts to emulate his father 's rowing career as " feeble " . Rankov , rowing in the third of his six Boat Races , recalls the race as one of his most memorable . He continued : " It was unbelievable . They kept coming at us and every time we tried to get away nothing happened . " Woodhouse lamented : " All I can say is that we shouldn 't have lost by so much . "

BBC reporter Snagge , commentating on his last Boat Race , remarked : " An absolutely cracking race ... a grand battle . "