

THE BOAT RACE

It's the smallest crowd in living memory on Putney towpath and conditions are the worst in nearly 70 years. Don't ask what it's all about; your life wouldn't be worth a handful of cold coppers. Here go Oxford. It's blue everywhere today; dark, light and common or garden cold blue! Experts reckon this is the best Oxford crew in recent years.

Cambridge, about two pound per man heavier are confident, though only two of last year's 'wonder crew' are rowing today. Both coxes are wearing goggles to keep out the blinding snow. Cambridge won the toss and chose the Middlesex side. At the stake-boats for the start Oxford are nearer the camera. They won't take long over the preliminaries, - and they're off!

The Cambridge plan is to get ahead on their sheltered side so that they can cross over to the inside for the big Hammersmith bend. But Oxford are rowing grandly in roughish water and holding on. Cambridge are hugging the bank but they can't shake Oxford.

At Hammersmith (just visible through the blizzard) the two boats shoot the middle span of the bridge dead level.

Now Oxford ought to shoot ahead around the big Hammersmith bend - just about halfway - but Cambridge are holding them well.

They're through Barnes Bridge, and now Cambridge have the advantage, and they're just ahead. Three years ago the light blues won a thrilling neck-and-neck race. Today's Oxford stroke, Chris Davidge, stroked them when they lost by a quarter of a length at the end of the four-and-a-quarter miles course. With a violent wind and strong tide, conditions are as bad as they can be for good rowing but both crews are rowing beautifully.

Cambridge look like drawing away - but here come Oxford. Davidge is calling for the last ounce and Oxford are coming up. It's the greatest race ever!

They're dead level as they approach the finish. This is where guts and condition tell ... the last quarter of a mile. They're very close together - oars almost overlapping - in fact they touched once. Now they're coming up to Mortlake.

It looks like a dead-heat - but at the post it's Oxford the winners by ten feet ... a sixth of a length! A well-earned victory and a very gallant performance by two game crews.