

what it takes
to earn your place

Celebrating rowing through the 150th Oxford v Cambridge Boat Race



Foreword by Sir Steven Redgrave

Julian Andrews



Above and right: Golden autumnal leaves at Wallingford.

Opposite: The watery November sun casts long shadows across the Oxford boathouse as a rower stretches out before a training session.



what it takes...





Training hard for the Boat Race and then facing that test is going to be a hugely formative experience in these guys' young lives. And after it's all over, how many of them are going to say, 'I wish I'd spent more time in the library?'

Wayne Pommen, Cambridge

what it takes...



feeling the water / fulham football club

The National Indoor Rowing Championships in Birmingham, where Oxford 'rows' against Cambridge for the first time in the season, on ergometers.

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what it takes...

feeling the water / fulham football club



The sole criterion for success is beating the other crew. Nothing else matters. This attitude has to rule your lives. It is not something that can be measured on the erg, in the gym, in hours or in kilometres. It's something much more than that – something intangible, indefinable but very, very real.

James Local, Cambridge



Hell on 'erg'.

what it takes...



Training was moved to Dorney Lake at Eton after torrential winter rain caused flood water on the Thames at Wallingford.

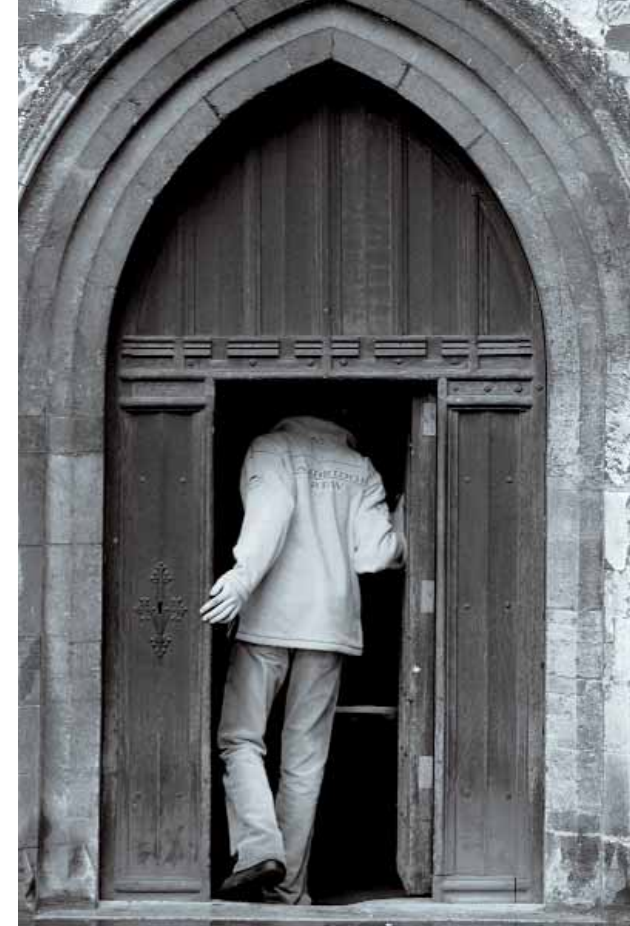




Any Boat Race crew is probably going to have at least one or two guys who will row, or are capable of rowing, internationally. They will also have, though, at least one or two guys for whom this will be the peak of their rowing achievement; and it's this combination which makes the Boat Race so alluring. It's probably more about getting the most out of the last four guys in the boat, than getting the best out of the top four.

Matthew Pinsent, former Oxford Blue

what it takes...



Ancient doorway at Peterhouse, Cambridge.

into the rhythm / mile post



Left and overleaf: Davos, Switzerland. Despite freezing temperatures and a complete 'white-out', Oxford coach, Sean Bowden, puts the squad through an intense training programme on their cross-country skiing camp which the athletes enjoy immensely.

what it takes...



Downtime in Davos.

Balancing your studies with squad training is a very tough thing to do. Personally, rowing is my priority, though I feel very privileged to be at Oxford and don't take this for granted.

Peter Reed, Oxford



A moment's reflection on Clare Bridge; the prospect of a freezing afternoon on the icy river looms, as Cambridge awakens to several inches of snow.





The weather front moved in with amazing violence. One of the eights was just launching, and there was a split second when it appeared the rowers were using the boat to shield themselves from the driving snow.



Cold and rain and snow aren't all that bad, they're just entertainment! It is when the wind really kicks up that you wish you were lying in bed hung-over like every other student in Cambridge. I will not remember the days I spent in the Economics Library trying to cram another essay in, but I will always remember the most miserable days on the water, with a 40mph wind.

Nate Kirk, Cambridge





I don't think you ever really think about the present, but only the next hurdle that you have to cross. While the initial camp seemed an important challenge beforehand, once achieved there is no time to pat yourself on the back. You just keep up with what's happening next so you don't get left behind.

Oliver de Groot, Cambridge



Circuit training at Goldie boathouse.



At the end of the day's racing many of the guys were at the point of exhaustion. I have no idea where they summoned up the energy from to go through the next 'piece'. One guy's hands looked as if they'd been through a mincing machine. They were red raw and covered in burst blisters. There would be no respite. He would have to go out and do it all again the next day... And for the next five days.



Right: Fingertip control in the cox's seat.
 Below: Imperial College make a flying start racing against Oxford reserve crew, Isis, but are overtaken by the finish.



what it takes...



In an attempt to prove his rowing prowess, the Oxford cox is egged-on by the rest of the squad to do an ergo challenge. As a result, the non-rower only just completes the exercise in a respectable time.

selection / hammersmith bridge

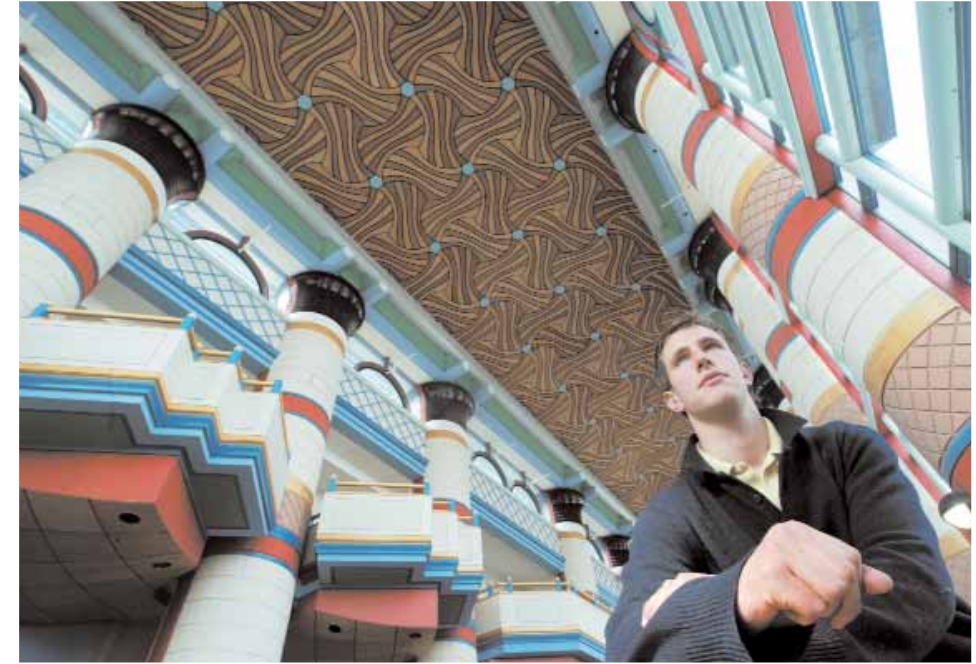


The winter months were unbearably cold – as a cox you're not exerting yourself physically. When eleven layers of clothing isn't enough, it can be a pretty miserable time... in the worst months, there wasn't time to dry your kit between outings. Putting on damp clothes isn't very pleasant.

Meadhbh Boyle, Cambridge



what it takes...



Above: Catching up on study at the Judge Institute of Management, Cambridge.

Below: The captain's room, Goldie boathouse, Cambridge.



fine tuning / chiswick steps



It takes individuality and someone who is prepared to stand out from the crowd. Rowers tend to be **OBSSSIVE** people – once the fire has been lit, you must be willing to sweep everything in your life aside until you get what you want. Winners do things differently. The Boat Race is the coming together of so many different things, but ultimately, if you are driven by your desire to succeed, then you will succeed.

Derek Clark, Oxford



Race day – Goldie.

what it takes...



Race day – Isis.

race day / finish line



Oxford crew members enjoy their last private moments before emerging from their house to confront the final goal.



what it takes...



The butterflies kicked in once the boats were attached to the stake boats – until that point the race is just one huge question to which you want the answer.

Robin Williams, Cambridge Head Coach

race day / finish line

The first clash by Fulham Football Club.



The second clash was quite violent and it really annoyed me. The blades were hitting the hull and then I got hit a couple of times in the back which really hurt. I thought 'right, that's enough'. I dug deeper and just rowed harder. I could hear Chris Coventry hurling abuse at the Oxford cox and telling him in no uncertain terms to get back on his own side of the river.

Chris Le Neve Foster, Cambridge

what it takes...

The clashes were violent. I missed two or three strokes off the back end and was trying to catch up, travelling up the slide faster than usual. My blade hit something and my seat shot forward, forcing the wheels out of the track. They are hard to get back in on land, never mind on the water. I thought I had it back in and started to row again, but became aware of metal grinding against metal and a burning smell. We still had three-quarters of the race to finish and there was no way I could have carried on. I had no option but to stop rowing and put the seat on properly. By time I'd done that we were three lengths down and the race was lost.

I wish I had another chance to do the race, but realistically I doubt that will happen. It meant the world to me, and to lose it in that fashion has left me empty. It cost me more than twenty thousand dollars to do this year, and at the end of it all I have to accept that there are far more important things in my life than trying to rectify the result of the Boat Race.

Chris Kennelly, Oxford



Cambridge ease past, as the Oxford's bow comes off his seat.

race day / finish line

This year's race was different. We still did all the training and put in as much hard work as last year, but we had an opportunity to win the race early on – and we took it. Without wanting to sound ungrateful for our win, it would have been even better to have had the chance to prove ourselves in a clean and fair race because we believed we had what it took, regardless.

Hugo Mallinson, Cambridge



On my first day of shooting for this book, I managed to capture a beautiful image of a swan on the river at Ely. It was therefore a poignant moment for me when, as the Cambridge crew stretched out their lead towards Barnes Railway Bridge, a swan once again flew into the frame, creating a stunning image, and somehow bringing my project to a fitting conclusion.

Below: The race ends, with the Oxford crew deflated.

Bottom: All eyes are on umpire James Behrens, as the Oxford cox makes a last-ditch appeal about the clash. All blame was apportioned to Oxford, and the result stood.



You have to be philosophical and be a sportsman. You have no God-given right to win – and we didn't. Cambridge have done as much work as us through the year and they won. They ruined my day. They ruined my year, in fact. But you have to congratulate them and say that they probably deserved to win.

Henry Morris, Oxford



It became the longest and most painful row I'd ever done. We are a great crew but we didn't show that to everybody. Four hundred million people around the world had to put up with watching utter rubbish from us.

Peter Reed, Oxford



Cambridge, winners of the historic 150th Boat Race.



what it takes...



We had been working on a push that was designed to destroy Oxford at any given time. When I saw their bow in trouble, I looked at our stroke. He nodded and said 'Let's go!' I counted the guys in – 'four second push... in two... in one... NOW!' The guys sat up and responded and the boat just went BANG! Ten strokes later, I looked back and we were half a length up and I knew we had the race in the bag.

Kenelm Richardson, Cambridge



race day / finish line



what it takes...



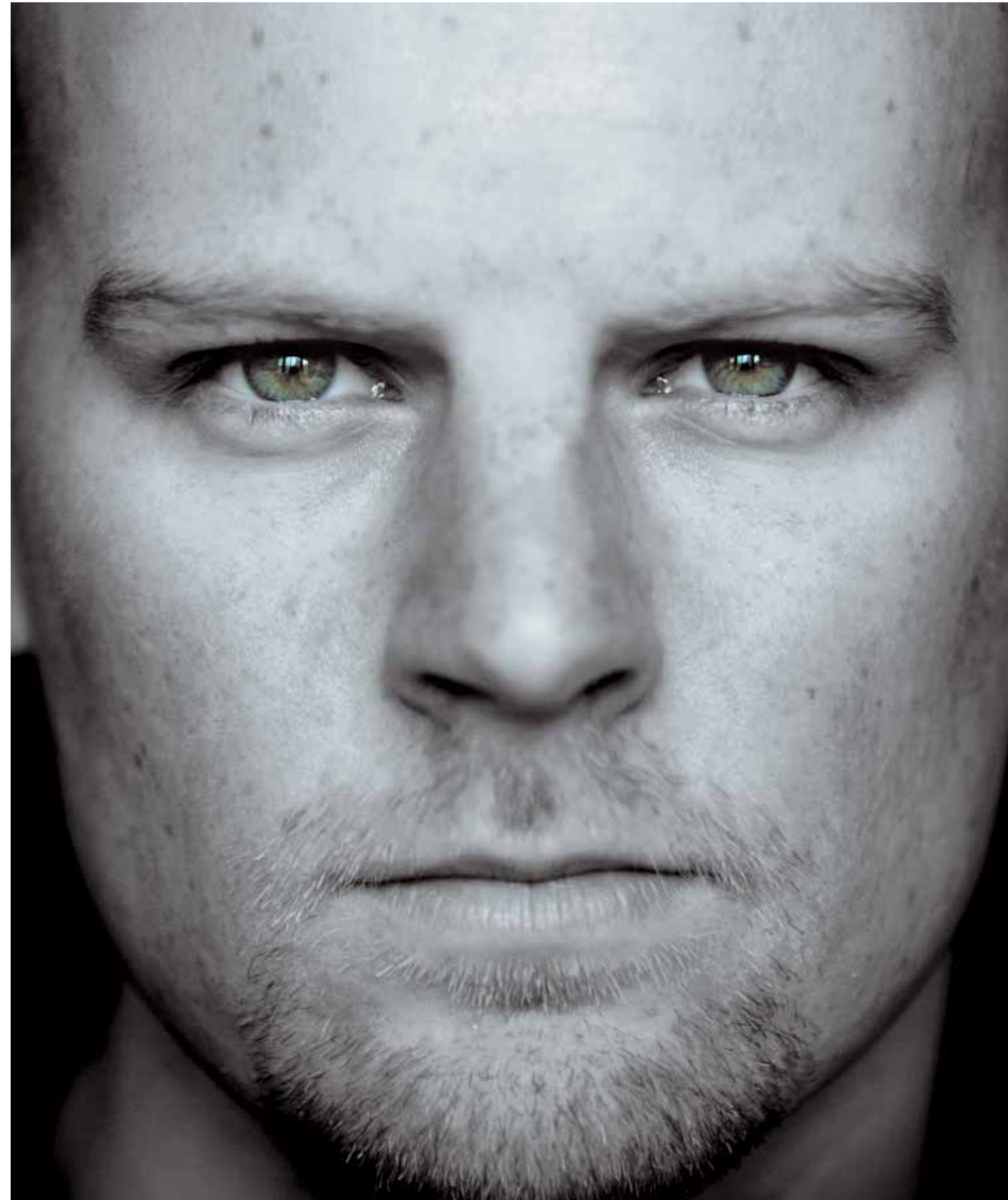
Win or lose, at the end of a gruelling campaign, rowers and coaches from both squads finally get the chance to let their hair down at the post-race party.

race day / finish line



The Boat Race is a funny thing. It can get under your skin. I originally only came here for one year, after which I planned to row with the Canadian national team and trial for the Olympics. Then I missed rowing in the Boat Race when I broke my wrist 48 hours beforehand. I still went home and ended up rowing the pair for Canada at the World Championships, but I decided to skip the Olympics trials and come back to Cambridge. That's how much it had come to mean to me. It's hard to even put my finger on what makes the Boat Race such a big deal for people. Maybe it's the history. Maybe it's the public attention. Maybe it's the singular focus of training to beat one other crew. In any case, this is how I chose to spend my last year of rowing.

Wayne Pommen, Cambridge



The 2004 Boat Race

Cambridge beat Oxford by 6 lengths in 18 minutes 47 seconds

Reserves

Isis beat Goldie by 1.5 lengths in 18 minutes 42 seconds



Cambridge Blue Boat

Chris Le Neve Foster
Kris Coventry
Hugo Mallinson
Sebastian Mayer
Andrew Shannon
Steffen Buschbacher
Wayne Pommen
Nate Kirk
Kenelm Richardson

Cambridge – Goldie

James Local
Colin Scott
James Orme
John Davies
Ed Sherwood
Oliver de Groot
Kyle Coveny
Richard Sykes-Popham
Stephen Cheng

Cambridge Coaching Staff

Robin Williams – Head coach
Mark Hall – Assistant coach
Robert Baker – Boatman and coach
Donald Legget – Coach
Martin McElroy – Coach
Tim McClaren – Coach
Alan Inns – Coxing Advisor
Gill Keane – Physiotherapist
Dick Price-Jones – Secretary
Dr. Chris Shambrook –
Sports Psychologist
Adrian Cassidy – Nutritionist
Dr. Simon Owens – Doctor

Cambridge Squad members

Meadhbh Boyle
Chris Grundberg
Darren Barnes
Steve Livermore
Nate Berner
Ben Smith
Dan Barry
Ben Skinner
Cameron Duncan
Chris Braithwaite

Oxford Blue Boat

Chris Kennelly
Basil Dixon
Andrew Stubbs
Joel Scrogin
Peter Reed
David Livingston
Henry Morris
Colin Smith
Acer Nethercott

Oxford – Isis

Montana Butsch
Nick Tuppen
Christopher Reeve
Nick Walter
Sam McLennan
Sam Parker
Jonny Mathews
Jack Tarrell
Will Young

Oxford coaching staff

Sean Bowden – Chief Coach
Jonny Singfield – Assistant Coach
Nick Howe – Assistant Coach
Derek Clark – Technical Consultant
Dan Topolski – Coach
Stephen Royle – Director of Rowing
Dr. John Sichel – Team Doctor
Katie Taylor, Sam Hynes,
Collette Tracey – Physiotherapists

Oxford squad members

Paul Holland
Brian Romanzo
Jimmy Woodrow
Ciaran Hayes

Thanks:

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