

22 Sporting Traditions



The University Boat Race

The two **best-known** English Universities Oxford and Cambridge are traditional rivals.

Their annual boat race on the River Thames in London is a **long-standing** tradition which began in 1829.

On a weekend in late March or early April, the two teams race between Chiswick Bridge and Mortlake, against the **flow** of the river, for a distance of almost 4 and a half miles (6,779m). In a fast race, it takes about 17 minutes and about 600 **strokes** to finish the course.

The race is watched by up to 250,000 people on the **banks** of the river and millions more on television which makes it one of the biggest sporting events in the world.

The Teams

Traditionally Cambridge wear light blue and Oxford wear dark blue so the crew members in both boats are called 'blues'.

Each crew is called an 'eight' because it has eight **rowers**. The '**cox**' (who is usually small and light) **steers** the boat. A good crew can row the boat at 18-22km/hour.

In the 2009 race, there were eight different nationalities amongst the crews and five of the competitors had competed in the Beijing Olympics. There were also two sets of brothers racing against each other in each team! The brothers said they couldn't speak to each other for a week before and after because the rivalry was so intense!

Who has won the most races?

The race is always exciting because it's never certain who will win. So far, Cambridge has won 79 races and Oxford 75 races. Cambridge won for 13 consecutive years from 1924-1936. There can also be surprises, for example in 1978 the Cambridge Blue Boat **sank**!

best-known = più conosciute
long-standing = di vecchia data
flow = corrente
strokes = remate
banks = sponde
rowers = rematori
cox = timoniere
steers = governa
sank = affondò

glossary



1 Read the text and then complete this paragraph.

The University boat race takes place on the in during the season. The Oxford blues wear and the Cambridge blues wear The crew can consist of many different of student. A fast race can finish in about minutes. Around people watch the race from the river banks. So far has won the most races but the winner is never guaranteed.

2 Listen to an 'Oxford Blue' talking about the race preparations and mark the words you hear.



- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> September | <input type="checkbox"/> play | <input type="checkbox"/> calories | <input type="checkbox"/> topic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> November | <input type="checkbox"/> freezing | <input type="checkbox"/> tough | <input type="checkbox"/> mentally |
| <input type="checkbox"/> winter | <input type="checkbox"/> weather | <input type="checkbox"/> fifteen | <input type="checkbox"/> helicopters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> practices | <input type="checkbox"/> wind | <input type="checkbox"/> kill | <input type="checkbox"/> win |



English Humour
 Where do sick boats go to?
 To the doc!

Other Sporting Traditions

Lacrosse is the oldest sport in North America. It originates from the Native American Indian tribes and was played to resolve conflicts. The first women's Lacrosse game was played in Scotland in 1890. Now modern Lacrosse is played across the USA, Canada and all British Commonwealth countries.



The modern game of golf originated in Scotland in the 15th century. The oldest **course** is in Musselburgh, Scotland, and history says that Queen Mary of Scots played there in 1567. One of the most important competitions is The Ryder Cup, a golf trophy which is **awarded** biennially between teams composed of the best European and American players.



The rules of cricket date officially from 1727. The game is popular in ex-British colonies such as India, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa who play a series of matches called Tests against each other every year. Each Test lasts a maximum of five days. Each day has three two hour sessions with a traditional 20 minute **break** for tea in the afternoon.



In 1823, William Webb Ellis, a pupil at Rugby school for boys, invented the game of rugby when he **picked up** the ball and ran with it during a game of football. In the earliest games, the ball was the **bladder** of a pig covered with **leather**!

Now rugby is a popular sport with a huge following for international competitions such as the Six Nations between England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France and Italy.



3 Read the information about traditional sports and mark true (T) or false (F).

- 1 Lacrosse is the oldest European sport.
- 2 The Ryder Cup is a golf competition played every year.
- 3 Each cricket Test lasts a maximum of three days.
- 4 The Six Nations is a competition of rugby between England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France and Spain.

T	F
T	F
T	F
T	F

course = campo
awarded = consegnato
break = pausa
picked up = raccolse
bladder = vescica
leather = pelle

glossary

4 How do you define a sporting tradition? With a partner, consider these questions.

- 1 Why do you think sporting traditions are kept alive?
- 2 How are traditional national sporting events connected to national identity?
- 3 Do traditional sports reveal the character of a nation?