

WORDS: HUGH FRANCIS ANDERSON

THE OARSOME

Glory and growth as London prepares for the 2015 BNY Mellon Boat Races

One of the world's oldest sporting events, the BNY Mellon Boat Race, will be turning 161 this year. Watched by thousands along the banks of the Tideway (the section of the Thames that is subject to tides) and millions on television around the world, the Boat Race continues to capture the prowess of a bygone era. Rowing, the quintessentially British sporting endeavour, has always maintained an air of privilege and awe. With heavy financial backing from financial institutions BNY Mellon and Newton Investment Management, and the continual rowing-prep dominated world of men's fashion, the Boat Race is more than a mere sporting spectacle, it is a pursuit for grandeur.

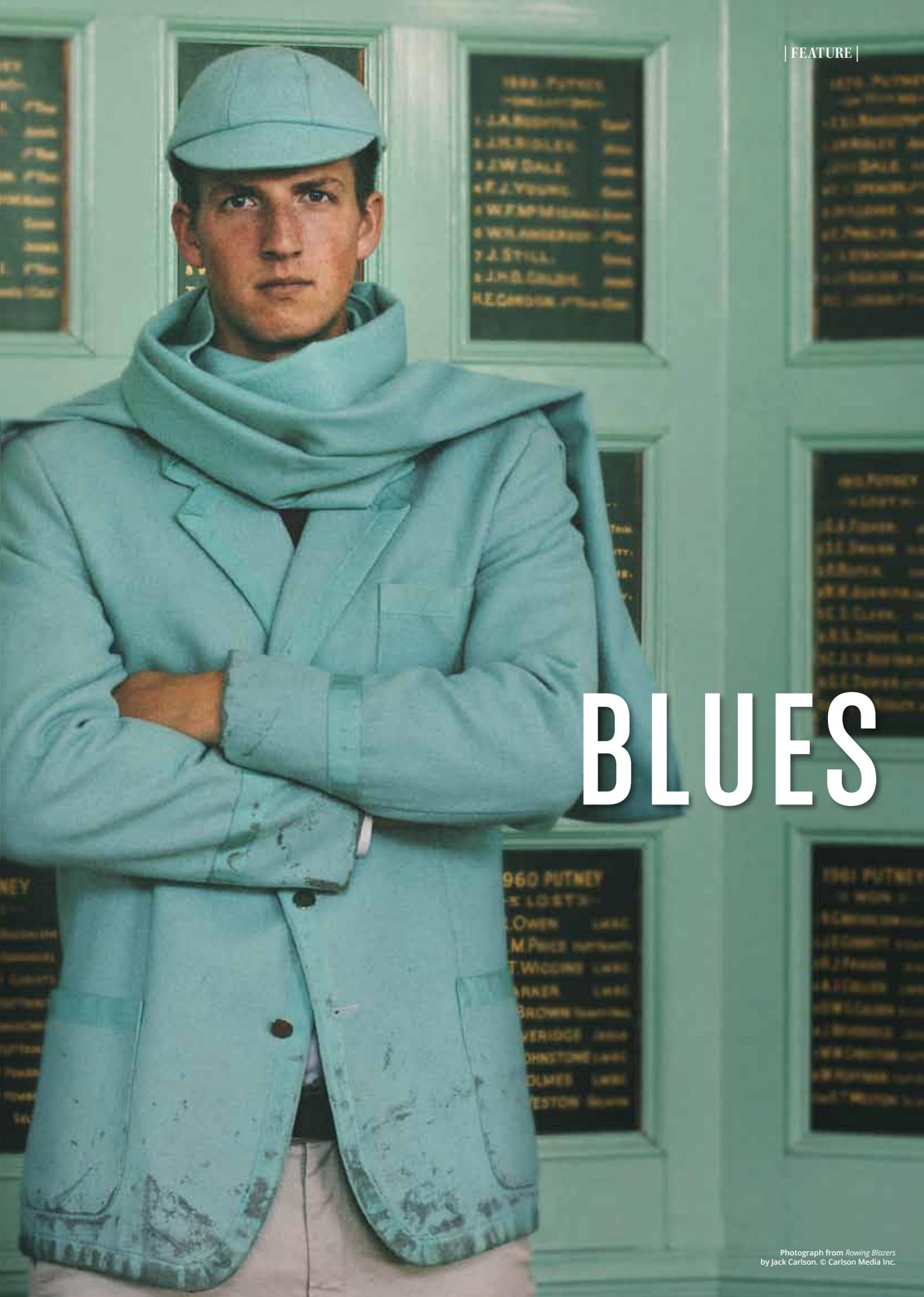
When the Cambridge and Oxford crews take to the water on 11 April, they will be feeling the all-consuming pressure and dread of subjecting themselves to 20 minutes of utterly gruelling physical and mental turmoil. The crews will have trained four-hours-a-day, seven days-a-week for more than six months in preparation for this race; equating to

over two hours training per stroke. There is no second place; for the winners there is glory, for the losers there is desolation.

As one of the last great collegiate sports, rowing has always encompassed an element of pedigree. With the high-level rowing programs of public schools such as Eton, Abingdon and Marlow, the prestigious universities of Cambridge, Oxford and Harvard churning out a plethora of world-class athletes, and the fashion houses of Hackett, Ralph Lauren and Gant regularly featuring the rowing-prep look, there is little wonder why.

However, in the modern day of spectator sports, we must wonder what allure the Boat Race has? Perhaps it's the national pride we feel when watching a glimpse of history, a casual stroll through British heritage; perhaps it's the great rivalry between two elite universities, knowing that one will ultimately fail. Either way, there is an atmosphere of magic that engulfs the Boat Race, leaving us in a state of utter admiration. "There's a big historical aspect to it, which





BLUES



Photograph from *Rowing Blazers*
by Jack Carlson. © Carlson Media Inc.



Photograph from *Rowing Blazers* by Jack Carlson. © Carlson Media Inc.



Oxford celebrate winning the 2014 Boat Race.

① is why it has a following, why eight million people tune in, and it's also a big event in London, with hundreds of thousands flocking to the Thames," says Olympic medallist and current Oxford University Boat Club president Constantine Louloudis. "As a brand, it's very British, it's part of the calendar, it's the meeting of worlds, it's the meeting of modern high-performance sport and old British tradition."

In 2013, international investment bank BNY Mellon became the official sponsor of the Boat Race. Its purpose: to provide funding for training, equipment and facilities, with the aim of bringing rowing, as a sport, to new audiences. BNY Mellon currently holds £18.7 trillion in assets, yet it still finds something in rowing to ignite its financial interest. "A focussed sponsorship generates constructive access," says Scott Stevens, head of marketing at BNY Mellon, "and it enables real strides to be made in the business environment, to the benefit of all." The institution's recent ad campaign, 'Don't be good. Be Brilliant. Perform like an athlete,' and subsequent website bnymellonbrilliant.com advocates the synergy between the Boat Race and business: "The focus, integrity, teamwork and excellence demonstrated by the crews are values that are aligned with our own organisation."

The 2015 race is evidence of the Boat Race's contemporary progression as it will feature the Newton Women's Boat Race on the Thames for the first time in its 88-year history. With considerable financial support from Newton Investment Management, the corporate spectrum is positively shifting. Newton's CEO Helena Morrissey says: "Now is the moment for business to back women's sport. On advertising alone, our initial investment has more than paid off."

The Boat Race not only attracts the attention of corporate industries, it also grips the world of men's ②

WHERE TO WATCH

The race can be viewed along the entire 4.2-mile course, from Putney to Mortlake, with the best views along the Putney towpath. However, should you want to experience this year's race alongside some fine food and drink, here are the pubs to make for:



THE DUKE'S HEAD – PUTNEY EMBANKMENT

At the very beginning of the course is The Duke's Head, and it's one of the best places to watch the events unfold. Along with the bustle and excitement of the race, great beer and a barbecue make The Duke's Head well worth a visit.

dukesheadputney.com



THE DOVE – HAMMERSMITH

In the middle of the course, right on the banks of the Thames, is The Dove. As the oldest Thames-side bar, which was once frequented by Ernest Hemingway, there is an electric atmosphere that makes The Dove an exceptional

Boat Race destination.

dovehammersmith.co.uk



THE WHITE HART – BARNES BRIDGE

At the end of the course you will find the White Hart. With award-winning ales, barbecue and ample seating, The White Hart is the perfect spot to see Barnes Bridge, and the undisputed champions of 2015 roar with victory.

whitehartbarnes.co.uk



ABOVE Photograph from *Rowing Blazers* by Jack Carlson. © Carlson Media Inc.

RIGHT Oxford celebrate winning the 2014 Boat Race.

⌚ fashion. With longstanding sponsorship from Hackett and Hunter, the event promotes British heritage, both real (Hunter-1856) and imagined (Hackett-1979).

“Hackett sees the Boat Race as an opportunity to engage with our customers through what is a truly British sporting occasion,” says Hackett co-founder Jeremy Hackett. “It allows us to make a product around rowing, from casual sports shirts to striped blazers, which lend an air of authenticity and credibility.” It’s an example of fashion houses attempting to recreate a forgotten era of the gentleman; the heyday of rowing in the 1920s and 30s.

The publication of *Rowing Blazers*, by Jack Carlson, showcases the diverse history of boat club cuts, and with its launch party at Ralph Lauren’s Bond Street store, it pays homage to the fashion world’s obsession with rowing wear. “Rowing blazers have had a tremendous impact on popular style – far more so than most of us probably realise,” says Carlson. “The non-rowing community’s love for this look only seems



to be growing.”

Rowing, it seems, is blooming into a commercially viable sport, backed up by the support of huge financial conglomerates and international fashion brands. The Boat Race, as its protagonist, certainly won’t be disappearing from the sporting calendars any time soon. Which means only one question remains: which blue are you? ⌚

COMPLETE THE ROWING LOOK



Navy double-breasted jacket, £600, Hackett, hackett.com



Red and white striped trousers, £115, Hackett, hackett.com



Cambridge Team Original Tall Wellington boots, £95, Hunter, hunterboots.com



City Gent umbrella, £115, London Undercover, mrporter.com