

Varsity Triathlon 2014

Cometh the hour, cometh the Oxonian. Sunday 11th May would be Oxford University Triathlon Club's chance to earn all honour and valour. It would be a chance to show why David Cameron is Prime Minister, and Nick Clegg is only deputy; a chance to show why Rachel Riley replaced Carol Vorderman; a chance to show that Hugh Grant, who embraces his loveable British nature, is superior to Americanised Hugh Laurie; a chance to prove that T.S Eliot could have rapped rings around Lord Tennyson; a chance to show that Robert Hooke made unbelievable and unrecognised advances in science, and that Isaac Newton is a bit overrated. In short, we had a chance to vanquish Cambridge. This was the Varsity Triathlon.

We gathered at sunrise. Having had a brief meeting, and having procured nourishment from Ahmed's Kebab Van (well, one of us had), we set off towards Northamptonshire. Despite the best efforts of Tom 'Scotty' Hughes, the team arrived at Grendon Lakes in good time. The older members of the team had told fables of glorious sunshine and calm waters on the days of the Varsity Race. They had lied. As the rain beat down and the wind whipped up the waters, we began to wonder what the point of it all was. Then Cambridge arrived, and we remembered. We put on the wetsuits, with almost all of us managing not to put them on inside out (oh dear Christine). Of course, as every triathlete will tell you, once the wetsuit goes on, it is go hard or go home. Since his family live nearby, Luke Sperry was very much in favour of going home. General consensus, however, was to go hard, and so go hard we did.

With the lake at a piping 13C, we lined up roughly around the start buoy. One minute to go. We crept forwards. So did Cambridge. Thirty seconds to go. We inched forwards. The bloke in the kayak was not happy, but what choice did he have. He inched forwards. We inched forwards again. Then went the claxon, and all hell broke loose. Arms, legs, water, Eli Ball thrashing about like a seal on cocaine. All that we could do was remain calm and remember the famous words of Horatio Nelson: 'treat every Tab as if he were the devil himself', or words to that effect. With this saying ringing in our ears, almost all of us managed to complete the swim without swimming breaststroke the whole way (oh dear Christine).

The race was close as the front pack rounded the first buoy, but along the main stretch of the course the valiant, the radiant, the magnificent Luke Sperry surged ahead, carving through the waters like a katana sword through butter. By the time he heaved his weary yet still very attractive body out of the lake, the competition was barely in sight. Who knows, if it had not been for goggle-drop-gate on the way to transition, perhaps he could have held on to this epic lead for the whole race. As it was, everyone fast at cycling overtook him. And then everyone decent at cycling overtook him. And then everyone who could cycle at all overtook him. His race went downhill pretty quickly. If only the same could be said of his bike.

Laura Fenwick was the second-fastest female finisher in the varsity race. Together with Imogen Kempton and Katie Granville-Chapman she formed part of the women's blues team, who lost to Cambridge by 1min26sec. Marie McHugh, Alicia Livingstone and Hannah Plaschkes formed the women's seconds team that BEAT CAMBRIDGE by a whopping 16min56sec. Andrew 'Jonathan' Dyson came second in the men's varsity race, also losing out to his brother, Pete 'Alistair' Dyson. Andrew, Alec Watson and Alex Bradley formed the men's blues team, who lost to Cambridge by 3min16sec. Oliver Crossley, James Felce and Tom Quirk formed the men's seconds team, which lost to Cambridge by 1min49sec. Oxford was victorious in both mob matches.

And so Cambridge emerged victorious. Fun was had, but silverware was not won (apart from the women's seconds shield – well done girls!). Hawking, Paxman and Fry will be enjoying a hearty pint tonight, whereas the post-lash of Atkinson, Dawkins and Marr will be an altogether more sombre affair. Well done to all who took part in the varsity triathlon this year, thanks to the committee from this year, especially to Andy as president, and I leave you with perhaps the most striking picture of the day: me coming out of the water first.

