

Why Miss Goolagong should stay home

EVONNE GOOLAGONG and Lionel Rose must have smarted at the stinging attack—"exhibition niggers" he called them — by the columnist and novelist David Martin in the Sunday Observer.

Without condemning or defending his right to say it, one feels it's probably about time somebody cleared the air anyway.

No 19-year-old girl who only ever wanted to play tennis welcomes a confrontation with a political dilemma that isn't of her making. But, unfortunately, life's not as simple as playing tennis or taking tea.

There are other obligations; responsibilities to ourselves as individuals and to others as members of a group. If we are not too frightened to look closely at these responsibilities we will see that they are not so much conflicting as complementary.

If our group is large, powerful, and dominant, then responsibility for it is naturally shared among a greater number of people, thereby giving the individual more freedom with which to do "his own thing"; if, on the other hand, it is small, threatened, and raiding trash cans, selling badges, and lobbying an indifferent parliament for the right to survive, then we can't afford the luxury of such self-indulgence.

Nobody is suggesting for one moment that Evonne Goolagong

should not play tennis, today, tomorrow, or forever. Nobody is suggesting that she is not entitled to the prestige, honor, and the glory that she will undoubtedly accumulate in so doing.

But what we, as her fellow black Australians, are suggesting is, first, she has no moral right to allow this prestige to be used against our interests.

What Evonne ought to realise is that she doesn't need South Africa to become the international tennis star she is obviously going to be. Certainly, if she feels she has to go along with the Australian Government's frantic attempts to promote an image of racial equality and fair play — an image that no one will believe anyhow — then she grossly underestimates her own ability.

Furthermore, there are many others of all colors and callings who have refused to lend their prestige to South Africa's apartheid regime and yet have managed somehow to survive.

Take, for instance, Winifred Atwell, who has wooed the world with her keyboard magic. Dean Dixon, the black American con-

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ductor, said, "my presence in South Africa would lend this country a dignity it doesn't deserve."

Another black American, Marian Anderson, who fought her way out

of a Harlem slum to the concert halls of the world, there to be acclaimed as few have ever been, refused many times to go to South Africa and sing to segregated audiences; but still got to sing at the coronation of the King of Sweden.

President Kennedy's inauguration, and to be honored with doctorates of music as, in the words of Arturo Toscanini, "the greatest contralto in the history of recorded song."

If Evonne Goolagong thinks she will achieve anything either for herself or for racial equality anywhere by going to South Africa,

she couldn't be more wrong. Only

last year, a Japanese swimming team visited there but their pres-

ence in the country, once they were

actually there, was considered so

unhygienic that, after they swam,

the pool was emptied every time and disinfected.

On the home front, five of the Australian Wallabies decided that, although they, themselves, weren't considered quite so untouchable by white South Africans, having been and seen, they'd never go again.

Certainly these men have found through personal experience how obnoxious are South Africa's segregation laws and Evonne Goolagong will find them even more degrading.

One has only to read the Cape Times (April 4, 1970) to get some idea of the real attitude of the Vorster Government toward integration in sport:

"Do you want to open your tennis clubs to people of all colors? Do you want to put your bowling greens at the disposal of all colors? Do you want your cricket clubs open for membership of all colors?"

If the South African Government does, in fact, issue Evonne with a visa, she will be classified as "an honorary white." One shouldn't have to elaborate on what an insult this would be to her, her people at home, and to black men everywhere.

When one considers that very recently the black American super-

star of international tennis, Arthur Ashe, was refused entry to South Africa for no other reason than the fact that his skin is the same color as Evonne Goolagong's, one can't help feeling that she should at least be embarrassed at such an invitation.

Indeed, if she does not decline this invitation, it would seem that she doesn't have the sort of values one would have thought almost a prerequisite to international sporting achievement.

Surely this young woman must realise that she didn't get where she is by crawling on all fours and that she isn't going to go anywhere else that way.

In the late 1950s, when being black and a tennis player at the same time was rather more demanding than it is now, Althea Gibson made a stand at Wimbledon, against the same sort of people who felt that she was politically appropriate but socially embarrassing.

It's a hard and lonely thing to be the first in anything but a woman set an example that Evonne Goolagong would do well to follow now, and with her head held just as high.

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Laurie Thomas' column will be back next week.