

MS EVONNE FAY GOOLAGONG-CAWLEY

Citation for the Conferral of a Doctor of the University (*honoris causa*)

The name Evonne Goolagong-Cawley is well known in the history of Australian sport and the sport of tennis throughout the world. At the end of the 1960s this young athlete emerged from the small township of Barellan, New South Wales to become one of the great tennis players of the modern era. Evonne was the first female Aboriginal Australian to achieve prominence in international sport.

In her long and glorious tennis career she won well over a million dollars, ninety professional tournaments and was a finalist in eighteen Grand Slam events. A five-time Wimbledon finalist, Evonne faced and defeated some of the greatest tennis players in history such as Margaret Court, Billie Jean King and Chris Evert. She won Wimbledon twice, the Australian Open four times and the French Open once. Although she never won the US Open, she was runner up four years in succession.

Evonne was the third of eight children born to Kenneth and Linda Goolagong. As a young child she spent whole days playing with tennis balls, and even at the tender age of five earned pocket money by retrieving balls at the local tennis club. She received her first racquet at the age of six and quickly began devoting every spare hour to the sport.

Evonne learned basic tennis skills from members of Barellan's War Memorial Tennis Club. When she was ten years old, she began working with Vic Edwards, perhaps Australia's best-known tennis coach at that time. He was very impressed with Evonne's sporting talent and desire and took her away to train in Sydney and to lead a life apart from her family with little opportunity to learn about her Aboriginal heritage.

After winning many important Australian amateur championships, Evonne embarked on her first international tour in 1970 winning seven of the 21 tournaments she entered. In 1971 Evonne turned professional and lost no time in establishing herself on the world tennis circuit. That year she won the French Open and stunned the favoured Australian Margaret Court with a Wimbledon finals victory.

Throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s Evonne remained among the top players in professional tennis. She reached the Wimbledon finals three more times in the 1970s. No one could touch her in the Australian Open in the mid-1970s, however, as she won every year from 1974 to 1977. She also won the Australian Doubles crown in 1971, 1974, 1975 and 1976. Evonne was the main stay of Australia's Federation Cup team that won the Cup in 1971, 1973 and 1974, and reached the final in 1975 and 1976.

In 1972 in the New Year's Honour List, Evonne was awarded an MBE for her services to tennis. This honour was presented by the Queen at Buckingham Palace. On Australia Day during the same year, Evonne was named Australian of the Year.

In 1975 Evonne married Roger Cawley. She continued to play tennis and especially wanted to win Wimbledon again. By 1980 many tennis observers were writing Evonne off as a 'has-been', but she surprised them all by going on to win Wimbledon that year in a memorable final where she defeated Chris Evert. Evonne's 1980 Wimbledon victory was even more impressive since she was the first mother to win a Wimbledon singles final since 1914. Although she wanted to keep playing, injuries made it more and more difficult. In 1983 Evonne retired from professional tennis. In 1988 she was deservedly elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

Off the tennis court, Evonne has been a successful businesswoman, a tireless worker for charity and a devoted wife and mother. A rediscovery of her own extended Wiradjuri family was a catalyst for the Cawleys to leave Florida and return to Australia to live. In recent years Evonne has become increasingly involved in Australian Aboriginal affairs working tirelessly in developing a better understanding and awareness of Aboriginal people; bringing both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together; and in changing attitudes and perceptions.

In 1997 Evonne was appointed by the Minister for Sport and Local Government, the Honourable Warwick Smith MP, as a sporting ambassador for the Australian Sports Commission with the role of encouraging Aboriginal children to become more actively involved in sporting activities. This role has brought three main responsibilities since: firstly, to work with national sporting organisation to provide the sport input into the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's evaluation of the status of reconciliation in Australia; secondly; to use her role model appeal by visiting communities, addressing school groups and meeting with ATSIC Regional Councils; thirdly, to head up the Evonne Goolagong Sports Trust to obtain corporate and community donations for Aboriginal sport. The trust was established through the Australian Sports Foundation.

In 1993 Evonne published her autobiography entitled, *Home*, that documents her tennis life and traces her family history. As the title of the book suggests, Evonne's recent voyage has been a return to her Aboriginality she knew so little about in her youth and her competitive sporting heyday, as well as a physical return to Australia.

It is with immense pleasure that Charles Sturt University recognises the contribution of Evonne Goolagong-Cawley to Australian and international tennis and to the Australian community and confers on her the award Doctor of the University (*honoris causa*).

Dated this Twelfth Day of April Two Thousand