

Interview with Bonnie Logan
SESSION 1 (9/15/2020)
Timed Log

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Bonnie Logan was born in Durham, North Carolina, July 26 1949. Logan was athletic as a child and was a “tomboy.” She played many different sports with other children in her neighborhood. Everyday after school, once homework was completed, she would then play sports with other children, that was her daily routine.

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Her childhood neighborhood. Her family lived three blocks from North Carolina College (North Carolina Central University). Both her mother and father(Alice and George Logan and brother, George Logan) graduated from this college which was called at that time, North Carolina College for Negroes. Duke University was on the other side of town. Her childhood neighborhood was all Black, due to segregation and middle class. (Logan’s sister, Wenda Logan, graduated from Central State in Wilberforce Ohio)

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Logan started to play tennis at the age of 9, in 1958. Tennis was booming in the Black community at that time. The Algonquin Tennis Club served the prominent Black community. Logan’s brother and his friends would play tennis everyday at a local recreational courts and at the Algonquin. One day Logan went to play with her brother. He taught her the game.

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Bonnie would mostly play boys, her brother’s friends. Hayti, a Black business district in Durham, also called Black Wall Street, supported a Black middle class. Some of the businesses were Mechanics and Farmers Bank (still active, the 2nd oldest Black bank in the country), North Carolina Life Insurance (originally the North Carolina Mutual and Provident Association and later North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, one of the oldest Black insurance companies in the US) and many others. There were many Black owned businesses. Logan’s father and grandfather had a movie theater business. Her mother was a teacher.

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There were many Black families involved in tennis in Durham. The Algonquin was the only Black tennis club. There were country clubs around but Blacks could not go to them. Logan first tennis coach was Carl Easterling in high school. She also learned tennis from her physical education teach Doris Garrett, who also played tennis.

(Dr. Johnson was Logan's first coach followed by Easterling)

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Logan didn't play at the Algonquin. The club was gone during her time. There were several courts where Logan could play: North Carolina College had clay courts, there were courts at her junior high school, (Whitted Junior High School) E. D. Mickle Recreation Center had courts.

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Attending Dr. Robert Johnson's Summer Tennis Camp. Originally, Logan's mother didn't want her to go. She was worried about who would chaperone Logan as the only girl at the camp at that time. Logan stayed with Dr. Johnson's nurse, Miss Creecy. Logan was about 13 years old when she first went. This was not Logan first trip out of Durham as she would go to the American Tennis Association's (ATA) championships with her parents in Hampton, Virginia and later to championship in Wilberforce OH at Central State University.

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Logan was around 10/11 years old when she played her first ATA Championship in Hampton, Virginia in 1959. Her parents took her to the match. It was at this championship that she saw Althea Gibson for the first time. Althea had just won the US Nationals (later the US Open) and Wimbledon. Gibson did an exhibition with Pauline Betz at the championship. Gibson was Logan's idol and had been following her journey. Logan did not get close enough to meet her, but did see her.

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Logan was inspired by Gibson and wanted to accomplish and surpass her wins. In her high school year book, Logan wrote that she wanted to become a professional tennis player and teach physical education which she succeeded at both. There were not many girls playing tennis in her neighborhood in Durham. Logan mostly played with the boys until high school where there were girls who picked up the sport. She was more advanced than most of the high school female players.

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Eventually her mother became comfortable with the idea of her attending Dr. Johnson's summer camp and her parents drove her to Lynchburg, VA. What she first noticed when arriving was Dr. Johnson's big house and the tennis courts. She was very excited for the opportunity to play and travel. She went to the camp for about three summers. Other students who were there during her first visit included: local students (Elmer

Reed, Melvin Penn), Tina Watanabe (now Tina Mochizuki), Henry Kennedy, JD Lewis, and Conita Archie and Lenward Simpson.

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Her time at the camp did not cross with Ashe's time at the camp, but she did see him at some of the USLTA events. Logan recalls seeing him at the Grass Court Championship in Orange, New Jersey in 1969 and at the US Nationals in Forest Hills. She did not converse with Ashe at those times. Logan played her first interracial match in Chattanooga, Tennessee at the USLTA National 12 and Under Championship. Logan did not see any other African Americans at the tournament except for kitchen and service workers and found that discouraging. No African American spectators as well. She focused on winning and representing her race.

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Dr. Johnson was with Logan at this championship. There were others from the camp who were at this tournament, Lenny Simpson, JD Lewis. Logan doesn't recall any disrespect from other players or spectators. Logan won the tournament, but the title was taken away from her based on an age discrepancy. She entered and registered as a 12 year old, but turned 13 later that year and was told by that she needed to be 12 for the entire year to be eligible. She had to forfeit the title. If this had not happened, she would have been the first Black player to win a 12 and under championship. She had to give back the trophy which was very upsetting. Sports Illustrated gave Logan a Sportsmanship Award and Cup to replace the Cup that she had to give back. It was heartbreaking for her.

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Logan didn't turn 13 until after the tournament. It was a big deal and was in the newspaper. The incident made Logan more determined. Logan first played at the US Open in 1963 at age 13. She got an invitation to play at the US Open at age 14 in 1964 the first year she won the ATA Nationals. 1964 through to 1970 Logan won the ATA Championships. She was trying to match Althea Gibson, who had won it 10 years in a row. By 1970 Logan was a sophomore at Morgan State University and had moved on from the ATA. Roumania Peters won 8 consecutive ATA Championship in the 1930s, Logan is the third highest.

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The US Open in 1966. Logan was a junior in high school. Logan played Norma Baylon, Argentina's #1 player who was ranked 8 in the tournament. They played on grass courts and Logan was winning 5/2 and they called a foot fault on Logan. She had never foot faulted ever. It crushed her. Baylon won and it was crushing to Logan. There is a recording of this play. Dr. Johnson was there and he recorded it. He always

carried a video recorder with him. Logan doesn't recall how Baylon responded. . She doesn't recall if anyone challenged that behavior.

(We ran into a little technical difficulty that was quickly resolved)

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Logan parents we not able to come to the game. Money was not a motivation in playing tennis, it was the accomplishment of playing and winning tournaments. Logan afforded playing tennis through the support of her parents, locals in Durham and the ATA. Logan went to Morgan State University in 1967. Logan considered other schools. She was interested in playing both tennis and running Track. She thought about Tennessee A and I (Tennessee State University), since Wilma Rudolph, another African American athlete she admired, had attended. She also considered Florida A and M (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University), as Althea Gibson had attended. But she had played many tournaments in Baltimore, where she met Richard Hobson, who worked in news media as a publicist, who suggested Morgan as a college choice. Logan knew about Morgan and their coaches. Morgan wanted her and she ended up going.

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Logan played on the tennis team at Morgan. Dr. Effietee Payne who was running athletics was Logan's advisor and knew about her tennis history. There was a women's and men's team. They allowed Logan to play on the men's team. She won the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA#2) Men's Championship in 1969. Some were upset that she was on the men's team and won. Some of the men who played that tournament knew Logan from past matches. Logan doesn't recall any particular challenges to her playing on the men's teams, in fact players encouraged her, knowing about her accomplishments in tennis.

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There are photos of Bonnie and Ashe together, but she doesn't remember them interacting too much. In 1971 Logan left Morgan (she got her degree in June 1972). Dr. Johnson passed away in 1971, which left Logan wondering what she would do next. She crafted her resume and sent it to Gladys Heldman, who was the publisher of World Tennis Magazine. Heldman said yes to having Logan play in the Virginia Slims Tournament and asked her if she would like to play in the South African Open. Logan said yes.

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Logan was the first African American women to play in the South African Open. Evonne Goolagong (now Evonne Fay Goolagong Cawley) also played, as the first person of color to play in the South African Open. Logan mentioned that there was also Black

South African women who were playing in that tournament. Heldman and World Tennis arranged the trip for Logan. Her parents drove her to the airport in New York. She flew on her own to South Africa. A visa was arranged for her. She didn't have any problems getting a visa.

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It was her first international flight. It was a long flight, she stayed overnight at the airport in Brussels, Belgium. In South Africa she stayed with a Portuguese family that had two children. The children were very attendant to Logan. Logan loved the children. After a few days, she was transferred and stayed with a White South African family in Johannesburg. This family was very different. She felt tension, the family was leery of Logan. They would ask her questions about the past and of cotton fields, going back to slavery. She had to give them a "history lesson" and let them know that she was a college graduate. She didn't stay long. She lost in the first round of the tournament. She thought that she would continue playing in the European circuit but was brought back to the US. Others were continuing on to other tournaments. The women on the circuit were complaining about money issues. Logan needed money too to continue. She tried to get support and reached out to Coca Cola, but they told her they didn't sponsor individual players only groups. Logan learned the importance of having a team of support, you need a coach, advisor, publicist, agent. It is hard to succeed alone. Without this support, Logan decided that she should stop playing. During this time she stopped by Morgan and spoke to her advisor, Dr. Payne who advised her to get her doctorate in Iowa. Logan went to Iowa but , but the class schedule was too difficult. She got a call that teachers were needed in Baltimore and head there in 1975. She ended up coaching and teaching physical education for 32 years.

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Logan visited Soweto. She was there with a photographer Ronnie Kwei. He took photos and took Logan around Soweto. Logan was disappointed with what she saw. She was aware of apartheid before going to South Africa. She is happy that she went as she believes her presence in South African and at the Open helped someone.

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Logan did get to meet some Black South Africans. She remembers being called "the African Negress." Many wanted to come back to the US with her. Besides visiting Soweto, Logan didn't get out to visit other places. The Open was played at Ellis Park. Logan does not remember seeing many Black spectators at the match. She does remember taking photos with some well dressed South Africans after the match.

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Arthur Ashe, who was going to South Africa the following year, did not reach out to Logan. Logan played in the Virginia Slims tournament in Houston in 1972 after her

return from South Africa. She played against a player from Australian. Logan won and the player didn't shake her hand which is customary. Logan was not shocked, she sensed their fear in playing a Black player. Logan discusses the politics of women's tennis. She was commanding crowds at her matches without any compensation which frustrated her. Logan was getting support from World Tennis, but when the other players found out they complained and Logan's support was reduced.

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Logan eventually retired after failing to get support. Logan had her college degree to fall back on. Originally Logan didn't want to go to college. She felt that it slowed her tennis career, but her mother insisted. She retired in 1973.