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Mrs. King Beats Miss Evert At Wimbledon by 2-6, 6-2, 6-3

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By Fred Tupper Special to The New York Times
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WIMBLEDON, England, July 2—In one of the most incredible comebacks of her long career, Billie Jean King struggled from 0-3 and 15-40 in the third set, took six games running and defeated Chris Evert today, 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, reaching her ninth final at the Wimbledon tennis championships.

Since 1962, when as an 18-year-old she upset topseeded Margaret Court, she has had a love-hate relationship with Wimbledon, galleries. It culminated today with a swelling chorus of applause that brought her back from the way out of the stadium to wave delightedly to the 14,000 fans jammed around the center court.

Facing her for the title on Friday will be Evonne Goolagong Cawley, her happy-go-lucky days behind her. In a resolute performance as courageous as Mrs. King's, the Australian took three games in a row from Margaret Court to win the first set, then hit some shots of unparalleled beauty in the late stages to take the match, 6:4, 6-4, in 66 minutes.

There was little to suggest at first that Mrs. King had any chance. The immaculate Miss Evert, the defending champion, was swinging her from side to side, luring her into errors and occasionally passing her with the twohanded backhand.

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A forehand down the line put Miss Evert at 3-1, as Mrs. King seemed to be a smudged carbon of the Old Lady who has made such history here. Unable to keep the rallies going, Mrs. King varied lob and drop shot. But the set was gone as an attempted drop shot flopped low in the net.

At 2-all in the second set the five-time champion found her form. To win she had to get up to the net and every move was designed toward that end.

The best volleyer in women's tennis, she had been lifting her forehand volley. "I couldn't believe it," she said later. Suddenly the touch came. Four games she had in a burst for the second set.

There was a cog missing in the Evert machine. It stuttered in the crisis, as some wild forehands soared out.

Twenty — year — old Chris settled down. She had the first two games in the third set and the next game appeared crucial. With Miss Evert serving, it went to 30-40 in a long exuberant rally and Mrs. King had four advantage points but lost them all. Then she hit a shot out of court and trailed, 0-3.

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In the next game Miss Evert was at 15-40 as a King backhand went wide. Later Billie Jean said she had told herself: "If I lose the set at 0-6, I'd be so embarrassed. What a farewell!" She had said this would be her last Wimbledon.

The old champion could still move. She came out of nowhere to dig a drop shot out of the turf for 2-3. She raced from the backcourt to pick up a drop volley and put it away and go ahead, 4-3. And a smash from deep court put her at match point.

In the tension, one volley strayed over the far line. Another match point. Risking everything, Miss Evert smashed it away. Impossibly, Mrs. King hoisted the ball high again. That did it. Miss Evert banged it over the sideline.

"How I love Wimbledon and the center court," she said.

It may be good-by also for Mrs. Court. She came to Wimbledon in 1962, and won the title the next year and twice more after that. Thirteen years and two children later, she, like Ken Rosewall, has mixed emotions about returning.

For most of the match 32-year-old Margaret seemed the winner. She found that she could go foraging up to the net on Evonne's weak second service, and she was nearly infallible on smash and volley.

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But she should have known better than to hit so many balls to Mrs. Cawley's backhand, a hatchet that has chopped off many heads.

What Mrs. Court couldn't seem to do was serve well. Leading by 4-3 in the first set, she served two doublefaults and stared at a backhand that fled across court. Mrs. Cawley had entered a world of fantasy. Dreamlike shots flowed to unlikely places. A forehand down the line, a backhand across court and then another backhand rippling into the corner and she was at set point. But she had to play five more points finally to capture the set.

Set No. 2 and Mrs. Cawley was at 5-4 again, but trailing, love-40. In a magical minute she hit three shots at astonishing angles for winners. A ninth doublefault by Mrs. Court put Evonne at match point. She hit a forehand down the center and Mrs. Court volleyed the return weakly into the net.

Mrs. King had to put off her bid for her 19th Wimbledon title, which would tie the record held by Elizabeth Ryan, a doubles player. Tony Roche, her partner, scratched from the mixed doubles because of a slightly strained stomach muscle. He felt it would be unwise to play before his semifinal with Arthur Ashe tomorrow. Jimmy Connors, the defending champion, Likes on Roscoe Tanner.

There was a surprise in the doubles as Vitas Gerulaitis of New York and Sandy Mayer of Mendham, N.J., fought their way into the final against another unheralded team, Colin Dowdeswell of Rhodesia and Alan Stone of Australia.

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MEN'S DOUBLES

QUARTERFINAL ROUND

Vods Gerulaills and Sandy Mayer, U.S., deiated Gerald Detrick and Graham Slitwell, Britain, 6-4, 6:4, 6:2.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

Colin Dowdeswell, Rhodesia, and Alan Slone, Australia, deli ated Dick Crealy, Australia, and ??? Piliic, Yugoslavia, 9-8, 3-6, 4-6, 9-8, 6-3; Gerulaitis and Mayer deiatea Jurgen lassbender and Hans Pohmann, West Germany, 8-9, 3-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-3.

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