



# The Match: Althea Gibson and a Portrait of a Friendship

*Bruce Schoenfeld*

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With the help of friends who recognized her extraordinary talent, Althea Gibson rose from a childhood of playing stickball on Harlem streets to claim victory at Wimbledon. It is widely recognized that her sacrifices along the way paved the road for the successes of Venus and Serena Williams. But Althea's was a victory hard fought and painfully won.

She had no idea the turn her life would take when she met Angela Buxton at the French Indoor Championships. Despite her athletic prowess, Althea was shunned by the other female players. Her failing was her skin color. Angela, the granddaughter of Russian Jews, was also shunned. Her failing was her religion. Finding themselves without doubles partners, the pair decided to join forces, and together they triumphed, going on to win the 1956 championship at Wimbledon. The two women would become lifelong friends, and Angela would prove to be among Althea's greatest supports during her darkest times.

Gibson died in 2003, but her life and her contributions to tennis and race relations in the United States are well preserved in this valuable book. Bruce Schoenfeld delivers not only the true story of Gibson's life but also an inspiring account of two underdogs who refused to let bigotry win -- both on and off the courts.

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