

Basil D'Oliveira

time to declare



Johnnic Library

Editorials – Historical Opinions and Arguments

In this lesson plan, learners will become familiar with the concept of an editorial. They will be encouraged to identify the writer's opinion and to follow the development of her/his arguments.



Basil D'Oliveira (1931 -)

Basil D'Oliveira, often fondly known as 'Dolly', was born in 1931, grew up in Cape Town and played for St Augustine's club as had his father. In 1948, Dolly was selected for the Western Province Board Cricket Team. He was also an excellent soccer player, but cricket was his greater passion. Because he was classified Coloured his opportunities in South Africa were limited. He was given a contract in England in 1960 with the Central Lancashire League Club and in 1964 joined the English County team, Worcestershire. He became a British citizen, but always longed to go back and play cricket in the country of his birth.

He made his Test debut for England in 1966 and the next year was named as one of Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year, which is a very great cricketing honour. Just before the team was announced for the MCC tour of South Africa, a South African businessman appeared, offering Dolly R 80 000 if he agreed to say that he wasn't available to go on the tour. The businessman tried to bribe Dolly by promising him a job as a coach (for Coloured people) in South Africa. But Dolly refused. However, when the team was announced Dolly learned that he had not been selected, despite the fact that he had recently played really well, scoring 158 runs off Australia. Historians now suspect that the prime minister of South Africa, BJ Vorster, had secretly put pressure on the MCC to leave Dolly out of the team. But then it was announced that he would be able to take part after all because one of the players had suffered an injury. In September 1968 Vorster said that Dolly was not welcome and banned him from playing for England in South Africa. The MCC then cancelled the tour.

When Dolly first arrived in England, he felt embarrassed about the way he played cricket. In his first five matches he made only 25 runs in all! English conditions required different techniques. But there were other reasons that Dolly was struggling... After getting some good advice on how to play cricket in England, Dolly managed to make nearly a 1 000 runs in the 1960 season and he took about 70 wickets. In 1966, he played for England and subsequently represented that country in 44 Tests.



Basil D'Oliveira coaching students at Durban's Sastri Collect on a Monday morning Johnnic Library, 22 November 1966

Dolly remembers playing and watching cricket as a boy

"We were never coached. We used to practise in the streets of Signal Hill, where some of us would be hauled off to jail by the police if we were caught playing on the road..."

"Although we Coloureds had little to do with white people, I eventually wanted to find out more about their style of play and facilities. Whenever possible, I'd go to Newlands, Cape Town's famous stadium, to watch the great white players in Test matches. I'd sit in the segregated part of the ground, blissfully unconcerned that I couldn't sit beside a white man but terribly envious at the skills on display. I could only afford to go for one day – I'd clean my father's pigeon loft to earn my shilling for admission and walk the seven miles to the ground."

Basil D'Oliveira, Time to Declare: An Autobiography, pp. 3 & 4, Johannesburg: Macmillan, 1980

"I was eleven years old and captain of the Upper Bloem Street team, and we were playing the Buitengracht Rovers – as they liked to call themselves – on their home ground, Buitengracht Street.

We needed four runs to win and I was batting, last man in. I gave my khaki shorts a last hitch, took centre in front of the old paraffin blik (tin) that was the wicket and gripped firmly the plank that was the bat.

... I swung hard and connected. Up it went, soaring over the telephone wires for a six. (Over the wires was always a six)...

Things happened fast after that. My six carried on into the next street and although we lost sight of it we were able to follow its progress by the distant crashing sound of a broken glass, and the indignant yell of an outraged woman. Simultaneously a cop patrol van came around a corner. So our match ended in a scurry of fleeing players."

'Sport is my Whole Life', DRUM, June 1960

THE MOMENT OF HEARTBREAK

Source A: Newspaper article



Basil D'Oliveira with his wife, Naomi, in Kenya in 1958. Basil was acting as the Captain of the South African Non-European XI on a tour to Kenya Johnnic Library

Source B: Editorial

Sunday Times



Basil D'Oliveira is mobbed by youngsters after his innings of 96 runs in the second match featuring a Black South African XI against and East African XI in 1958 Bailey's African History Archive, October 1961

...From the word go as we report today, Mr Vorster was not prepared to allow D'Oliveira to tour South Africa with the M.C.C. and it may be asked why he did not say so all along...

In a sense the Prime Minister was taking a gamble, in the hope that the whole thing would sort itself out with the omission of D'Oliveira. The gamble has not come off. D'Oliveira is chosen and it seems to us that the motives of the M.C.C. are irrelevant.

It makes little difference whether they chose D'Oliveira because they bowed to political pressure, or for purely cricketing reasons. The end result is the same. D'Oliveira is in the team – and his presence in it is simply not acceptable in the land of his birth, where he is normally not allowed the privileges he would necessarily enjoy as an M.C.C. cricketer.

Our policies on racial issues are very clear, and it may be of interest to see just where they have landed us.

The inclusion of one Coloured man in a touring team, it seems would bring a multitude of embarrassments on a scale apparently sufficient to unsettle the entire nation.

Mr Vorster has lost an opportunity. It would have done us all a lot of good to experience a cricket tour with D'Oliveira in it.

The Sunday Times, 22 September 1968

Learner Activities

Be sure that you can distinguish between the two types of newspaper writing illustrated here. *Source A's* writer does show his sympathy for Dolly but is basically reporting on what happened. *Source B* is an editorial. Editorials are written by the editor often with her/his deputy and assistants. They express their opinions on current affairs.

- In *Source B*, say what the editors' opinion of the following is: Prime Minister Vorster; apartheid policies; and Dolly.
- In *Source B*, identify the techniques that the editors use to make their points: suggesting that Vorster is dishonest without saying so openly; putting 'one Coloured man' in italics;
- Collect and read editorials from current newspapers. Can you identify the editors' opinions and techniques?
- Write your own editorial on an issue you feel strongly about.

Other Ideas

Do research on the sports boycott of apartheid South Africa, and hold a debate with the motion: "The sports boycott was one of the deadliest weapons against apartheid."

Criteria for Assessment:

- Learners are able to distinguish between general newspaper reports and editorials.
- Learners are able to identify editorial opinion.
- Learners are able to locate and follow arguments expressed in editorials.
- Learners are able to express their opinions consistently and clearly.

Curriculum Link – Grades 10 & 11

LO 2, AS 3

Grade 11 Content Link – How did apartheid entrench ideas of race?

"Basil D'Oliveira was completely broken when he heard the news yesterday of his omission. He had just come off the field after scoring 128 for Worcestershire against Sussex, and was listening to the radio in the dressing room with members of the Worcestershire team. When the 15 names were announced Tom Gravney took him into a room nearby and they talked alone.

D'Oliveira said little before breaking down. He tried to compose himself sufficiently just to say that had had no statement to make apart from being bitterly disappointed.

But he could not control his feelings and had to ask a friend to make the statement on his behalf."

The Star, 29 August 1968



Basil D'Oliveira shakes hands with a young Queen Elizabeth. Basil was playing his first test match for England versus the West Indies Johnnic Library, June 1966

