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by **Gianni Clerici**

### **Suffering for a discopathy, he loses to Edberg. Alarm for a bomb that wasn't found**

**LONDON.** It was almost evening and many colleagues were writing their articles, as I found myself in a half-desert press room looking at Mecir. Just two years ago, on the same Centre Court, Big Cat was up two sets to love against a hypnotized made powerless Stefan Edberg, who played the part of a willing all-serve-and-volley apprentice.

Just two years ago, Mecir had burst in the third, to catch up with a 3-1 lead in the fifth, and then definitively sink. Already then, Miloslav Mecir had something that didn't work in his fourth and fifth back vertebrae, the pins for a tennis player. Already then he had reached Wimbledon with just two weeks of training in the swimming pools, that allowed him one of his strange statements: "This way my muscles are more nimble".

That lack of training had, according to me, deprived him of a final, in a match in which Edberg had just had two merits: not to be too ashamed and hang on. Lost that incredible match, Big Cat had so well got back to venture to Seoul and win the Olympic gold medal, beating just Edberg in the semifinal.

I had met him, smiling as usual, at the athletics stadium, and he looked to me optimistic, he had predicted a good 1989. In fact, he would reach the final at the Australian Open, but, from that day on, troubles would start.

At the end of the year, Big Cat was only 18th in the world rank, and we all wondered whether, at last satisfied, he lived on a private income, or his damned back vertebrae prevented him from the necessary fatigues of this job.

During the Italian Open, Cavallo, one of the greatest Mecir experts, had expressed to me serious doubts on our favourite player's desire. Five billions liras gained in his career can be in fact more than enough for a Slav who, most of all, likes fishing and family intimacy.

Mecir struggled, played a couple of little tournaments and then disappeared, got back not fit enough to compete. In Paris, he would sadly lose to Tim Wilkison, an American only good on hardcourts.

Here in Wimbledon, today, he would attract only a few nostalgics. In fact, there was no match. Stefan Edberg has, towards the Cat, respect as well as fear. So he started with a high pace and Mecir, poor him, was forced to move.

With the discomfort of an old discopatic, I saw my misfortune mate was unable to bend, and couldn't even charge on his right leg: the one he needs as pin for his legendary backhand. On

serve, that was never his best shot, Mecir was then forced to throw the ball very high, not to charge too much on his aching spot. A suffering, in the end. A suffering he incredibly faced with his usual sense of humor. On an unbelievable mistake for one with his touch he would linger to check the height of the net.

Mecir will maybe follow professor Sanier's advise, the surgeon from Paris who treated Leconte twice. We just hope he will get back with Henri's efficiency, who hung on till the fifth set against Antonitsch.

But I want to be selfish, I'd like to beg him to quit if the surgeon's bistoury shouldn't work at its best. There are reporters specialized in obituaries. If we can't see a healthy Mecir again, better remember him at his best, see him at the likes of Rosewall, Nastase, Mac.