

by **Grit Steinweller** (from Halle Westfalen)

I remember when I was a teenager and Stefan Edberg was playing matches in Australia (Australian Open) I woke up very early in the night to watch his matches live in TV. My mother said with a shake of her head: "You are crazy! Only to see this man you don't sleep enough." And when I had to go to school in the morning and sometimes the matches were so long, I couldn't watch till the end. That was really too bad because at that time we didn't have access to the internet. So I only had the hope to watch a replay or the news in TV. When I was 20 years old Stefan Edberg finished his professional tennis career. So I didn't get the chance to go to a tournament to watch a match with him.

But 16 year later my childhood dream (to see Stefan Edberg live and in person) came true on this beautiful Sunday in Halle/Westphalia in the Gerry Weber stadium. My heart was thumping like mad when Stefan Edberg entered the center court. It was also nice to see Anastasia Myskina, Martina Navratilova and Michael Stich.



*photo by **Grit Steinweller***

The match was an excellent tennis-show. It was amazing to see Edberg's great serve-and-volley-game. The players made jokes and laughed very often. During the match a music band came into the stadium. The men were directly behind me and sang the Italian pop song "Quando, quando, quando". So near it was really loud for me. In this time Stefan Edberg smiled in my direction and I felt that was a smile for me although he meant the musicians. I have never struggled against tears of joy before. After some minutes the musicians went away and I could hear the ball again. Tennis without hearing the ball and the other typical sounds is only half as beautiful.

After the match I went downstairs and jumped over the chairs in one of the VIP-boxes to stand in front of the center court as near as possible. First Martina Navratilova came in my direction and I asked her for an autograph on my base cap. So I got my first autograph but it was my aim to get autographs from all players. I was in luck that Anastasia Myskina came to give me her signature because she didn't give so many autographs like the others. Meanwhile Stefan Edberg gave an interview and I thought: When he is ready I will cry for him as loud as I can! And I did it! I called "Stefan, Stefan!" Or should I say I cried like a teenager on a Take-That-concert? And yes, Stefan heard me and came to me to give me an autograph. What a moment, what a magic moment! The most handsome, modest and fair man in the world was one or two meters near to me. I will never forget this moment. Thank you, Stefan, I love you! Last but not least Michael Stich also came in my direction and my arm became longer and longer to give him my base cap for getting the last autograph from him. And he accomplished my desire. What a great day! I was so happy and got an everlasting smile in my face.