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At the time of his rivalry with Boris Becker, the Swede often ended up in the background, overwhelmed by Boris' personality. But now, thanks to his extraordinary work with Roger Federer, he took his revenge.



The dualism between two champions is the essence of any sport. In the last decade, tennis was based on the Federer vs Nadal rivalry. Today they left to Djokovic the role of number one, not the scepter of popularity.

Before Roger and Rafa there were Sampras and Agassi, and even before Edberg and Becker. For people like me, who started following tennis in the second half of the '80s, the one between the Swede and the German is the rivalry by definition. Because it's true that Ivan Lendl was number one back then, but Stefan and Boris split the fans.

They were young, people said both would be number one, and, most of all, they played extremely good tennis.

I have always rooted for Edberg and I have always suffered his rivalry with Becker, one who always took more front covers despite stats were saying the Swede was better. 6 Slams won each, a final lost in Paris that still remains a big regret for Edberg, who ended the season at No.

1 twice, a position the two occupied for 72 and 12 weeks, respectively.

But Becker was a character on and off the court. He won Wimbledon at 17 and, a few weeks later, without even having a driver's license, he became the testimonial of a car manufacturer at home.

Externally, Becker appeared (or was) more glittering than Edberg. Like Agassi and Sampras afterwards, with the first "winning less", but clearly more popular for a million reasons.

Edberg never lacked love and support from the crowd, but perhaps the Swede has never had the overwhelming heat that Becker inspired. Maybe that's why he announced his withdrawal a year early, so he received cheer and affection in a memorable season that initially seemed only a long walkway, but then also became very good in terms of results.

Stefan's ☐ decisive break

Years have gone by. The two continued to live opposite lives.

Edberg has always appeared little and whenever you saw him he was always in great shape. Becker, instead, we have seen him anywhere. Self-centered as many former champions, the German changed his physical look and quickly lost the freshness of the times gone.

This year everything changed, because both are back on track: one became Federer's coach, the other Djokovic's. And with this double choice the general outlook has changed dramatically.

Edberg took ☐☐ the decisive break and, twenty-five years later, surpassed Becker. Not just because, technically, the German did not give Djokovic a significant help, unlike Edberg who managed to bring back the great Federer. But because, "thanks" to Roger, the Swede has had in a few months the consideration he failed to receive as a player.

When Nole became a father and decided to call his son Stefan, plenty of easy jokes were made: even the Serb, rumors said, chose Stefan rather than Boris. Through his work with Federer, today Edberg is and will be perceived in a different way by young people who have not seen him play live. Good, but too late. At least the acknowledgment didn't come posthumously.