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by **Robin Finn**



Edberg and Ivanisevic after the match

Stefan Edberg, the elegant serve-volleyist, had the curtain brought down on his prolific Grand Slam career last night at the United States Open, the Slam he learned to love enough to win twice.

"I produced the best serve-and-volley tennis of my career here when I won in '91," he said, "but you can't play forever."

The unseeded and 30-year-old Edberg, who decided that this year would be his last because Grand Slam titles have been beyond his grasp since he captured the 1992 Open, was throttled in the quarterfinals in straight sets by fourth-seeded Goran Ivanisevic.

Edberg's polite but lingering 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (9-7) bow -- with 19,000 fans howling on his behalf, he broke Ivanisevic when he served for the match at 5-4 of the third and saved four match points -- left him with a Grand Slam record of 178-47.

He earned six Grand Slam crowns and, starting with Wimbledon in 1983, competed in 54 consecutive Slams, a record unsurpassed in the sport.

His departure also deprives the sport of the last of the classicists to rely on pure touch in this age of power brokers.

"One thing that will always stand out is the way he moved on the court, he glided above it," said Tony Pickard, Edberg's coach from start to finish. "As a man, he portrayed everything a sportsman should be: an athlete, a gentleman, and, once he learned to get a little emotional with himself, a genuine performer."

Though Edberg had beaten Ivanisevic in their last three meetings, he never posed a significant threat last night. The volatile Croat was far too worried about shedding his sobriquet as the best player never to win a Grand Slam to risk worrying about hurting Edberg's feelings. Ivanisevic had hurt feelings of his own to contend with. He had never made it to an Open quarterfinal before, and now he will face Pete Sampras in a semifinal.

Edberg came into this Open with high hopes but humble expectations. All he really wanted to do was make an honorable exit. Getting to the Open's quarterfinals for the first time since he won the second of his consecutive titles in 1992 was a coup in itself. That he upset the defending Wimbledon champion, Richard Krajicek, in the first round was a morale booster that carried him through the next three rounds, but it wasn't quite enough to fend off Ivanisevic.

"Goran nearly served me off the court," he said. "But it's been a good way to end it; this is what I think I'll miss the most, being out on the court and having the crowd push you to the limit."