rw39-----u s AM-TEN--Wimbledon 02-23 1174 ^AM-TEN--Wimbledon ,1173(^By RICK WARNER= ^AP Tennis Writer=

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) _ The flowing blond hair, the lightning reflexes and the exultant drop to the knees after a Swedish victory made it seem like Bjorn Borg was back at Wimbledon.

But this time the name was Stefan Edberg.

Edberg, accused in the past of lacking the killer instinct, finished off two-time champion Boris Becker with a deadly serve-and-volley game Monday to become the first Swedish champion at Wimbledon since Borg in 1980.

When Becker netted an easy backhand on the final point of the rain-plagued match, Edberg dropped his racket, fell to his knees and tipped over on his back in jubilation over his 4-6, 7-6 (7-2), 6-4. 6-2 victory.

It was the third Grand Slam title for Edberg and the third this year by a Swedish player, following Mats Wilander's victories at the Australian and French Opens. The Swedish domination brings back memories of Borg, who won five straight Wimbledon titles from

"'He's been a big influence on me as a person and a player, and he's done a lot for Swedish tennis,'' Edberg said after playing in the first men's final in 102 Wimbledons to stretch over two days.

'All of us grew up watching him in the Wimbledon finals,'' he said. ''Now that I've won Wimbledon too, it's quite fun.''

The loss was Becker's first on Centre Court after 14 victories and his first ever in a grass-court final.

After beating Edberg in the Queen's Club final last month, Becker accused his 22-year-old opponent of cracking under pressure. It was Becker who cracked this time, in a match that spanned almost 23 hours even though there was only two hours and 50 minutes of action.

Becker, who describes Wimbledon as his tennis birthplace, acted like he was uncomfortable on his home court, shouting at himself and swatting his racket in the air after making unforced errors.

After beating defending champion Pat Cash and top-seeded Ivan Lendl in the two previous rounds, Becker said, he was mentally and physically drained.

`I couldn't push myself today,'' the 20-year-old West German said. ``I think he (Edberg) was really pysched up for the match more than I was.

``I had already beaten the defending champion and the No. 1 player in the world,'' he said. ''So when I played the final match,

it was like, `What am I doing here?'''

The match, which had been halted by rain Sunday with Edberg leading 3-2, resumed two hours late on Monday because of constant

After play began at 1:04 local time, Becker quickly broke Edberg with a backhand service return to go up 4-3. Edberg fought off a break point and held serve in the next game just before the rain struck again, delaying play for 98 minutes.

When play resumed, Becker held serve twice to win the set on a netted Edberg backhand. But Edberg, who won the 1985 and 1987 Australian Opens on grass, stormed back to win the next three sets and his first Wimbledon championship.

`This could be the best match I ever played in a Grand Slam tournament,'' said Edberg, who moved to London three years ago. `After the second set, I felt very comfortable out there. I was serving and volleying so well and getting all my returns back. I felt like I couldn't miss. "

Both players said it was difficult to maintain their concentration with all the rain delays.

"'I didn't even know when to eat," Edberg said. "'I had a big lunch at 12:30 and they called me on the court a half-hour later. " Becker felt the turning point was his failure to convert a break

point that would have given him a 4-3 lead in the second set.

Edberg had just served his fifth double fault of the match and Becker appeared ready to seize control and take a two sets to none lead. But Becker sent a backhand return wide, and Edberg then held serve with a forehand volley and an overhead smash.

Asked what would have happened had he broken Edberg in that game, Becker said without hestitation: 'I think the match would have been over.''

But it wasn't, and the players remained on serve to force a

tiebreaker.

won the first five points before netting a service return and hitting a forehand wide. But Edberg came up with two straight service winners to even the match at one set apiece. The stress of a tight match seemed to work in favor of Edberg. who rallied from two sets down to beat Miloslav Mecir in the semifinals and had only one straight-set victory in the tournament. Becker, on the other hand, lost only one set en route to the final. ``I had that (Mecir match) in mind today,'' Edberg said. ``I was never going to give up until the last point." Edberg carried his tiebreaker momentum into the final two sets. In the third set. Edberg broke to take a 2-1 lead with a backhand return and then held at love with three service winners and a forehand volley. The volley made Becker so angry that he threw his racket to the ground in disgust and was slapped with a code violation for racket abuse. ``I was quite tired (after the tiebreak) and I knew I had to dig in deep," said Becker, who won here in 1985 and 1986 before losing in the second round last year to Peter Doohan on Court No. 1. ``When I lost my serve at the start of the third set. that was just what I didn't need, '' Becker said. ''I had to play on emotion after that.'' He became increasingly frustrated, however, as the match wore on and Edberg continued to display a seamless serve-and-volley game. Edberg lost only five points on his serve in the third set. which he capped with a crisp forehand volley into an open court. The final set started off badly for Becker, who lost his serve in the opening game on his seventh double fault. Edberg broke again to take a 4-1 lead and then held serve twice to end the match. The final point came after Edberg made a reflex volley off the tip of his racket, setting up what should have been a backhand putaway a few feet from the net. But Becker slammed the ball into the net, right in front of Edberg, then stepped over the net to congratulate the new champ. Edberg received the winner's check of \$272,250, while Becker earned \$136,125 as runner-up. In other matches Monday, Steffi Graf of West Germany added the women's doubles championship to her women's singles title when she and Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina beat the Soviet pair of Larisa Savchenko and Natalia Zvereva 6-3, 1-6, 12-10. Americans Ken Flach and Robert Seguso won the men's doubles crown with a 6-4, 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 victory over Anders Jarryd of Sweden and John Fitzgerald of Australia in a match that was spread over three days. In the mixed doubles final, the American team of Sherwood Stewart and Zina Garrison beat Kelly Jones and Gretchen Magers of the United States 6-1, 7-6. AP-NY-02-23-98 2326EST (

Edberg, who entered the match with a 4-9 record against Becker.