

# Becker wows record crowds of tennis fans

by Lorne Manly

The Player's International Tennis Championships lived up to all its expectations this year despite the ousting of three of the tournament's top seeds in early round play.

A record crowd of 110,929 attended the nine day, \$525,000 tourney last month held at the National Tennis Centre located on the York campus and they were treated to some excellent tennis, especially from crowd favourite and winner Boris Becker.

"Boom Boom," as his fans endearingly call him (a nickname he disdains), marched through the tournament without much of a challenge as most of the minefields (i.e. John McEnroe, Yannick Noah, and Ivan Lendl) had been detonated in the earlier rounds.

Instead of having to face Noah in the semi-finals or Lendl in the finals, Becker's competition was American Jonathan Canter (the surprise of the tournament) and Swede Stefan Edberg, a highly ranked Swede but still a notch below Lendl.

Becker was tested by both players but prevailed over Canter and Edberg by scores of 7-6 (7-4), 7-6 (7-3) and 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 respectively.

The tournament may have had a happy ending but the future did not look too bright after Thursday's third round matches. Black Thursday saw three of the top five seeds defeated as Kevin Curren beat the top seed Lendl, Robert Seguso downed the fifth seed McEnroe, and Canter disposed of Noah, the third seed.

But the expected absence of hundreds of fans for the weekend matches never materialized as the drawing power of Becker compensated for Thursday's disaster. The capacity crowds on the weekend proved that Becker has become the main draw on the tennis circuit.

Becker is a champion tennis fans find difficult to dislike—a problem never experienced with McEnroe and Lendl. McEnroe with his temper tantrums, and Lendl with his icy cold exterior, have not captured the hearts of fans like Becker has done.

With the latter two one could only admire the brilliance of their play but people seem to genuinely like Becker. He even was confronted by gaggles of screaming female teenagers on his trips to and from the clubhouse.

And after the final match on Sunday, Becker delivered the *piece de resistance*, winning over any remaining in the uncommitted camp. With an impish smile on his face and a self-deprecating tone in his voice, he summed up his feelings on the tournament: "There's nothing more to say; record crowds, good weather, and I'm the winner."

**Left: Yannick Noah**

**Below: John McEnroe**

**Below left: Ivan Lendl**

**PHOTOS BY GARY HERSHORN**

