

Chang, 17, Captures French Open

By NICK STOUT and SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES JUNE 12, 1989

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Michael Chang wrote the final chapter to his amazing story at the 1989 French Open today, beating Stefan Edberg for the championship, 6-1, 3-6, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2, in yet another steady come-from-behind effort.

Chang, the 17-year-old Californian who upset Ivan Lendl and then beat Ronald Agenor and Andrei Chesnokov to gain the final, is the youngest men's champion in the history of this tournament or any other Grand Slam event and the first American winner since 1955. He is \$300,000 richer for the victory.

"These two weeks, regardless of what happened today, are going to stay with me my whole life," Chang said after his 3-hour-41-minute match. "Everything was run so smoothly, and I want to thank everybody for, just, everything.

"God bless everybody, especially the people of China." A Match of Errors

The match, decided largely on errors, lacked the brilliance of the Chang-Lendl encounter, in which Chang kept himself alive with long rallies until he could seize an opportunity to break the cadence and drill a winner.

In playing a serve-and-volley specialist like the 23-year-old Edberg, whom he had beaten earlier this year at Indian Wells, Calif., Chang turned to well-placed passing shots and hard service returns that the third-seeded Swede could not handle. He tried to get the serves back quickly, before Edberg could get to the net.

He had the most success with that strategy in the fifth set, when Edberg was tiring. "I knew what he was going to do today because he did the same thing at Indian Wells and I was prepared for it," said Edberg. "I started off not serving too well but then I found my rhythm. But it's tough to take the ball early."

Chang, seeded No. 15, opened the match with an ace on the center line, and he played aggressively throughout the first set. Edberg seemed lethargic and unable or unwilling to make that extra stretch to the corner. The set took only 31 minutes, and it seemed like it was going to be a one-sided affair. Chang Relies on Speed

But after Chang broke serve in the fifth game of the second set to go ahead, 3-2, Edberg broke right back to even the score at 3-3. Edberg broke serve two games later to make it 5-3 and then won the set when Chang lobbed too long.

The two right-handers were doing things differently. Chang was missing the sidelines that he earlier had been targeting well; Edberg was beginning to perfect a shot that would serve him well throughout the match: a spinning backhand down the line. But Chang was getting to volleys that less speedy players would have missed, and this seemed to pressure Edberg to aim even closer to the lines.

Chang survived the fourth set by refusing to choke on a host of crucial points. In the third game, for example, after both players had broken serve, Chang fought back from 15-40, saved four break points and squandered the advantage three times before nailing down the game.

A similar sequence happened when Chang served at 3-3, 0-40. He came back to deuce on two errors by Edberg and a winning passing shot, then saved two more break points after Edberg had the advantage. In the end, he claimed the game to go ahead, 4-3, and won the set by breaking Edberg's serve in the 10th game. The winning point came when Edberg volleyed into the net after Chang's hard service return. 'Tried to Hang in There'

Asked how he had turned the match around, Chang said: "I really don't know. It was just a couple of points here and there. I just tried to hang in there. During the fourth set when I was down a break, I really thought the match was gone. Stefan maybe gave me an opening, and then a chance went through my head and I thought, 'Maybe I can do this.' A few points maybe inspired me to try even harder than I was trying and to believe there was a chance I could come back."

Chang opened the fifth set by serving a game that went to deuce six times. He saved two break points but eventually lost the game on a long lob.

Instead of losing spirit, he broke right back and won the game by returning a

drop shot with a drop of his own. He broke again in the fourth game to go ahead, 3-1, and then held serve after surviving two break points and going to deuce four times. Chang had the momentum now, and was just a matter of time before Edberg ended the match with a weak forehand into the net.

"I think he started off playing unbelievably," Edberg said. "He didn't make a mistake in the first hour. I was slow in working my way into the match. But then I started to play more aggressively. I had a lot of chances to break him in the fourth set and I didn't take advantage of one of them. That's when the match slipped away from me." From One Champion to Another

Tony Trabert, who beat Sven Davidson in the American-Swedish final of 1955, was here to watch the newest American champion.

"I'm very happy for him," Trabert said. "I think he played extremely well.

"What Michael did so well was to take risks under pressure. That's what some other clay-court players don't do."

Much has been written here of Chang's Christianity and his tendency to publicly thank Jesus Christ after each victory. When he was asked why he thought Jesus chose him and not Edberg on Sunday, Chang replied:

"I know that every time I bring that up you see the pens breaking or the heads nodding and I know that people are sort of getting sick of it. But if I really want to tell you the truth, it really is Jesus Christ. I give him all the credit for the things that happen in my life. That's the way I am.

"Stefan probably said he got to the final because he worked really hard or for a different reason. Everybody has his own reasons. That just happens to be mine."

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