

# Mubadala Citi DC Open

Monday, July 29, 2024

Washington D.C.

## Ben Shelton

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. You talked about wanting to use this event to get ready for the US Open. What are you trying to get better at for the Open?**

BEN SHELTON: I think the few days leading up to this tournament, once the tournament starts, I'm really focusing on honing in on my aggressive game style, getting a lot of serve and volley reps, being a little bit more accurate with my first ball forehand, just trying to start feeling like I'm moving really well on the surface.

Those have been kind of three of my keys that I've been focusing on this week. I think I'm heading in the right direction.

**Q. A lot has happened in the past year since we last saw you here. How do you feel you are a better player? The all-around game? Tell us how you feel.**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I think everything in my game has certainly improved. I've put in a lot of good work in the last year. Just felt more comfortable on tour. I think a few big areas are my movement, my return of serve, and I would say just my shot tolerance in general.

I think more often than not now I feel comfortable playing and moving on the court, getting into long points, and winning some of the long points.

At this time last year, I was still more of a one-strike tennis player. I think I've added a lot of variety to my game.

**Q. I think you made the decision a while back to skip the Olympics. What went into that? How are you feeling now that that week is upon us?**

BEN SHELTON: I couldn't really hear you.

**Q. You made the decision a while back to skip the Olympics. What made you want to do that? How do you feel with it now that the Olympics have gotten underway?**

BEN SHELTON: Our season is really long. See a lot of people getting injured at this time of year, a lot of guys pulling out of the Olympics. They went and tried to play but weren't ready.

You go from clay to grass to clay to hard in a month and a half, you fly straight to Canada after the Olympics to then get ready for the US Open, play three more massive events, I didn't think that was the right thing for me to do this year.

Obviously I would love to play for my country in the future. I think that is something that would be really cool for me. I have tons of friends in the Olympics in different sports. Yeah, it's a bucket list thing for me. I'm going to try to hard to qualify for L.A. in 2028.

I'm happy with the decision I made. Certainly it was a difficult one. I think for preparation for the US Open, the rest of the year, it's the right decision for me.

**Q. How happy were you with your progress on grass? Wimbledon, you played yourself into good form. How much do you think that could be your best surface someday?**

BEN SHELTON: I wasn't particularly happy with how I played early in the grass season. The three tournaments leading up, I struggled to find my groove. Once I got to Wimbledon, I started playing some really good tennis. That's the one that counts.

I think each surface that I play on, I'm improving. I did a little bit better on clay this year compared to last. I won a title, made the third round of the French versus losing first round. Now I made the second week of Wimbledon.

I'm happy with the way I'm improving, but I know that it's a process. I'm not the player that I want to be on those surfaces quite yet, but I'm moving in the right direction.

**Q. When you had the success at Wimbledon, then difficulty at Atlanta, what do you have to do to make sure you're keeping yourself stable?**



BEN SHELTON: The difficulties I had at what?

**Q. Atlanta.**

BEN SHELTON: Then what was the question?

**Q. How do you keep yourself stable during those ups and downs?**

BEN SHELTON: I've had several what people would consider setbacks on tour. Last year everyone was talking about me not winning two consecutive matches in a row for the middle part of the year, then the semis of the US Open.

Tennis is just one of those sports that you're not going to have a perfect week every week. It's all about your 52 weeks, that body of work. That's what I'm looking forward to and trying to get right.

It's my first match back on the hard court since the Miami Open. I did a lot of things that I think can be improved. I actually think I played better than I did in Atlanta last year.

That improvement is encouraging to me. Yeah, I'm going to try to build on it in Washington.

**Q. How big does this week become trying to ramp up for the US Open?**

BEN SHELTON: I don't really put too much importance on any single week. This being a 500 is definitely an event that I want to perform well and do well. Any tournament in the U.S. is important to me.

But we have two Masters 1000s and a Grand Slam coming up. I guess you could say that I put importance on every week I play in the calendar. I don't care I feel a sense of urgency or anything like that about this week.

**Q. You had a good run in doubles last year. You're playing again this week. There's an initiative this week with...**

BEN SHELTON: I'm not getting mic'd up, man (laughter).

**Q. Your thoughts on that possibility, not for you personally, but as a consumer?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I think it's really cool for a consumer. I think it's a good idea. The guys who consent to it, I think there will be some funny stuff that comes out from that happening.

For me, I like my career (smiling). I'm not saying that I say

crazy stuff on the court. I can be a wild card at times. I don't say things out loud, but when the mic is right there, anything can happen (smiling). I'm going to keep those thoughts and under-the-breath sayings to myself.

I hope everyone who does it enjoys it and doesn't say anything too bad.

**Q. You've played doubles a number of times at a number of different big events. I'm curious, why is it important for you to play doubles?**

BEN SHELTON: I think there's a bunch of advantages to playing doubles. With the game style I try to play in singles, it's advantageous to be able to work on the volleys, quick volleys up at the net. Serving and volleying. Only having to cover half the court. Returning to specific targets. Having to keep the ball out of the middle because the doubles guys have gotten so good at putting those balls away.

A lot of times it's getting used to the conditions at the tournament I'm playing before I play a singles match. It's a little bit more on your body. I'm young. I can handle it. It's like why would I not play doubles when prize money is crazy high I think in doubles. You get extra matches. It's another chance to improve.

I think that my doubles career at Grand Slams could be coming to an end because that's a little bit too much I found out on my body playing all three last year. I had another tough situation with doubles at Wimbledon. With three-out-of-five sets, it's completely different.

At all the other tour events, yeah, I try to play doubles whenever I can.

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