

Western & Southern Open

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Belinda Bencic

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Congratulations on an incredible Tokyo. What has life been like for you since winning gold?

BELINDA BENCIC: Thank you.

Yeah, I mean, I don't think much really changed. I kind of had little bit time off. It was little bit more hectic than usual obviously. It was all very cool, enjoyable. I saw my friends and family, which was really important to me.

My current plan was to fly directly from Tokyo to Montreal, then play there, then come here. But after everything, the tough week, I decided to kind of skip Montreal and fly home, then fly from home to here.

Yeah, I was getting to practice I think real quick after that. Now I'm here. I don't know, not much has changed. I still, yeah, prepare for my tournament. I feel like, yeah, this is a new tournament, like nothing else matters any more.

Q. Back to Tokyo for a split second. Do you feel you played that event any differently mindset-wise, tactically, the vibes around your tournament there? Was it no different than how you approach every tournament?

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, I think for me it was very positive vibes from the start. I think in the end I kind of thought about it, and I think this, like, put me through a lot. It was totally new experience for me. I just knew from people how it's going to be, Olympics and everything. But to experience everything yourself, literally everything we did was an experience. We went for breakfast, that was amazing. Then we went to the gym, to the Olympic Village gym, and that was a whole new experience.

I feel like all these kind of things, the positive vibes, I didn't think so much about kind of the tennis. Also before the match I was of course nervous, but I was very excited, like, to play the first Olympics, to be able to call myself an Olympian. For me Olympics means so much. I'm not saying it because now after all I won it, but it's really from the start.

Kind of I think I was on a high the whole week emotionally, really looking forward to every day. I really loved the village. I would definitely not change that again, to stay in a hotel or something. Next time for sure I want to stay the village again. It was so much fun.

Yeah, I feel like this kind of transition to my game little bit like this, going for it, I have nothing to lose, I'm so happy to be here kind of vibes on the court as well.

Q. Have you ever been as emotional at an event as you were in Tokyo? How long did it take you to come down from that high? You're saying your life hasn't changed, but what does it feel like now?

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, for me of course I think it was the most emotional week ever. Every match, the quarterfinal match when I kind of won, then realized I can take for a medal, I have a chance to play for a medal. It was already emotional.

Then the next one, winning the semifinal knowing I have a medal now for sure. Obviously to put the cherry on top, to win gold, it was very emotional for me.

I was really crying a lot on the court, as you all could see. But for me it was kind of, yeah, unbelievable in this moment. I really was so happy. Obviously also the doubles. It kind of always puts a cherry on top after kind of I won singles, we went to doubles and won again. To have, like, two medals and everything what was going on, it was really cool.

I think physically I was really on a high as well because all of the positive emotions, it kind of pulled my body through the whole tournament. But I think that was the first that kind of went down after. After the tournament I was really tired of playing singles and doubles, just a tough scheduling overall with the conditions really being extreme.

Mentally I was still, like, on a high even days after the tournament. That was also not dangerous, but you knew the day will come that you will also fall down from this. But it hasn't been, like, very extreme. Just some days at home

I've finally been able to relax and everything. Kind of, yeah, I came down a few days after the games.

Q. The medal itself, people want to see it, touch it, so what about that aspect? Where have you got the medal? Is it in a place that every time you go home you can see it, in a safe place?

BELINDA BENCIC: Yeah, I mean, definitely a lot of people want to touch it. I can confirm that (smiling). I feel like it's getting scratched as well a little bit. As I have two, they scratch against each other. I'm really careful now about that.

For now it's in a safe place because I'm not home yet. I think when I get home I will try to find a special place for sure so I can see it.

Q. Only the fourth Swiss tennis player to win an Olympic medal. Marc, Stan and Roger.

BELINDA BENCIC: And Martina and Tímea.

Q. What are the messages you got? Which one meant the most?

BELINDA BENCIC: I mean, it was like tons of messages I got from everyone. I feel like I have many people very close to me. For sure I feel like when I was, like, calling or texting them after, for sure I have to find the most important ones. I still really have some unanswered messages. I hope everyone, of course, understands. I didn't want to be on my phone all day long answering messages.

I think just family and friends have been really important. I feel like I've called really the most important ones right away after the match. I was super happy of course about Roger's messages, his kind of happiness about my success. It was really sweet from him. It felt really like he was there, as well. Obviously, of course, all the family, my former coach I called, thanked her.

Yeah, kind of just important people (smiling).

Q. After the Olympic gold medal, what is your next big goal?

BELINDA BENCIC: Well, I think to win the Olympic gold medal, it's really like a dream coming true. Of course I have dreamed about it, but you're not really going to achieve it, achieve it right away and everything. It was my first Olympics I played. For me it was very kind of - how you say - not a surprise but very happy that I kind of reached. Unbelievable almost.

Now I feel like really people are going always to ask, What do you do next? What is your goal, to put pressure and everything. For me, achieving this, it's already amazing. If I stop my career tomorrow I can be very happy about everything.

Still of course I want to play, keep playing. I don't want to be now like, Next one I want to win this, then I have to win this Grand Slam and everything.

I think it's still very difficult in the women's tennis. I think everyone is playing very well. I just really want to play freely and kind of enjoy it. I've already reached my dreams. I can really, like, relax and enjoy my tennis and work hard still for what's to come. I don't want to define what's my next kind of dream.

Q. About not thinking forward, pressuring yourself, people think you have to win a Grand Slam, we've seen it as a springboard, Andy Murray in 2012 won the Olympics, then a Grand Slam, Lindsay Davenport in '96. Do you think the experience of having this big-time success on a big stage will help you going forward when you're in tournaments that are important?

BELINDA BENCIC: Yes, for sure. This is for sure something that is an experience. Already you felt how it feels to, like, win a big title. I've always wondered how it is. Actually, when you have the match point, such an important Grand Slam or Olympic final, how do you even walk up to the line, finish it, and everything.

So now I actually know. I've heard a really good quote: when you always give luck a chance, go deep in important tournaments, then at some point maybe it will, like, go for you, turn around for you.

This is definitely my goal, to kind of try and dig deep of course in the big tournaments. Maybe I can use this special experience to kind of finish it. Yeah, for me this is very important to have. It's not going to be like a first-time big final or something.

Q. Regarding prize money, I saw a comment from Dasha Kasatkina, frustrated that prize money hasn't come up on the WTA in some time. Since the pandemic started, has it been tougher financially with lower prize money across the board?

BELINDA BENCIC: I mean, for sure it's difficult. I think first of all we are very happy that we are able to play and kind of earn something. There are so many people that lost their job or don't have their job or have a family. Like it's a pandemic, you cannot go out, there is a lockdown or

something.

Second, I think for me, of course I have had lower prize money, but for me it has not been difficult. I think for maybe the little bit lower-ranked players it has been difficult. I definitely feel like I hope the tours will come up with helping them a little bit more. It doesn't have to be financially, but maybe covering a room, room for the coach. Maybe something can be done with the flights, maybe discount or something.

I hope, like, we can find a way to increase the prize money also in the lower rounds, in the qualifying. I feel like this is the priority now because obviously the top players have a lot of money already earned and will survive. It will not be bad.

Of course I hope, like, it's going to go back to normal and maybe sponsors will pick up again, how you say, the TVs and everything. That would be amazing. I definitely feel like the focus has to be on the lower-ranked players right now.

Q. First-round match, a rematch.

BELINDA BENCIC: I don't want to talk about that (smiling).

Q. Can you talk about having to face Marketa? Could you share about your friendship with her, personal relationship with her. That was a nice selfie you took afterwards.

BELINDA BENCIC: Yes, of course, we know each other a long time on tour. Of course, and also me being able to speak Slovak, it's also nice. Slovak and Czech are very similar. That's kind of cool.

Yeah, I mean, about the draw, I don't know how that happens. I don't know how that happens so fast. We'll take it like with humor. It's a new match. Obviously it starts from new.

But still, yeah, we'll see how it goes. I think it will be, again, very battle because we never play easy matches. Also in Miami we played a very long one. Kind of our games match up very... It's very interesting for people to see. It's never of course one-sided. We'll see how that goes.

It's definitely a new match. But still I'm happy I kind of beat her in the very important one, now we play a first round. I think we both can be more relaxed and I hope it's going to be a good one.

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