

# Western & Southern Open

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Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

## Ashleigh Barty

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Just want to take you back to Tokyo if I may. Now that you have had a couple of weeks to think back on it, can you maybe just talk about that experience and what it was like having John Peers put a bronze medal around you and winning the bronze medal with somebody you have known for a very long time?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, an incredibly special event I think for all Australians. I think the Australian Olympic team did a fantastic job across the board. And it was, I know for the tennis team, it was a massive driving force for us to try and bring home a medal and for me personally to be able to win that with John and experience it with him just made our Olympic experience all the more special.

I think Johnny and I, we've known each other a long time and we'd earmarked this event for quite a while, in saying that we wanted to play together, we wanted to win a medal. We played some great tennis. And to be able to bring home a medal for Australia, add to our medal tally was incredible.

**Q. Where does something like that rank for you when you consider all that you have done in your career?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: It's different. It's hard to compare experiences, because I think at different times in my life maybe some of the experience that don't seem so big from the outside mean the most to me. And I think that's what makes sports so unique is that there is such a deeper meaning behind a lot of matches, behind a lot of certain moments.

For me, the most enjoyable ones are all the funny things and all the memories that make me smile that happened off the court. A lot of the time it's more what comes with the experience. That whole Olympic experience, being able to see a few Aussies I hadn't seen since January, February, was incredible. And obviously to be able to share some of our stories we've had over the last three, four months, being able to talk through them and kind of chat to them about it and just hear some Aussie accents made a massive difference.

So I think it was an incredible experience but really, really hard to compare to everything else I think because it was so unique.

**Q. Where is the medal? Are you carrying it with you, or have you sent it back home? What have you done with it?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: No, I sent it back home. Our physio that was with us, he took it back home for me. I think he's just about finished his quarantine, so I know he will drop it over to mum and dad's and the kids will be able to enjoy playing with that one at home soon.

**Q. It was a godsend, because I did the hotel quarantine during the Olympics, and that certainly helped while the time away. To see the expressions on your face and Peersy's face, have you looked back at the images and the video and the stills of those moments?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Not quite. I think it's going to be something for me at probably the end of my season, at the end of the year, is to really have a chance to take stock and kind of remember the memories and also share them with those that I love the most.

I think for Peersy and I it's going to be really nice to connect again when we're both back in Australia with both of our families. I'm sure there will be a bottle of red on the dinner table and we'll be able to laugh about some of the memories we created in that week. Certainly it brought us closer and to be able to share it together was awesome.

**Q. I'm curious if you feel like you've been able to get a break at all, even if a short one, but between Tokyo to now? Were you able to rest, recover, kind of reset for the second half?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I hope so. I think we did everything in our power that we could to rest and find that balance of resting, recovering, but training and trying to prepare. Obviously it feels like it's been quite a while since I've played here in the American summer.

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So I think it's kind of new challenges that start all over again. It's about accepting those and being fresh and being as ready as possible to give my best on that given day and understand that it might not be at the level that we maybe want it just right at the start, but that's okay.

I think we just keep chipping away on the practice court, keep working on things, and then hopefully we can get a few matches to find a bit of that groove on the hard court.

**Q. Do you feel like you're practicing well? Have the practices, things kind of locked back into form? Do you still feel like it's a little gap between where you want to be? How is it feeling on the practice court?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I think for me on the practice court, there is always room for improvement, always things I'm trying to adjust. Obviously coming here to Cincy, the conditions are different to what I remember a couple years ago.

So I think probably in a place where I've never quite felt 100% comfortable being able to find a way through and try and get myself into matches and maybe not necessarily rely on my tennis and rely on other things and kind of make sure I give myself the best chance to continue to improve each and every match and get more and more used to conditions.

Then we know that we've got New York right around the corner, which is obviously a really exciting way to finish off our Grand Slam calendar year. Yeah, I think this period of the year is always an enjoyable one, without a doubt. I can't wait to get started back into some matches again and test myself against some girls who have obviously been playing some really good tennis.

**Q. To win Wimbledon in obviously the way that you did and accomplish that big dream and then to kind of have to rush off to Tokyo and then now, getting back into this, do you feel like you have been able to process what happened over that fortnight at Wimbledon? Do you feel like -- I can understand if you'd feel like you're in a situation where you're a little bit on autopilot at the moment, it's another event and things, but have you been able to put it behind you, deal with it, process it, move on? I don't know where your head is at with all that.**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Honestly, no. I think I was still trying to comprehend in my brain what we were able to achieve as a team, and particularly the adversity we went through in between kind of the French Open period and through Wimbledon.

I think we still haven't sat down as a team and really talked through that. I think that's going to be a really enjoyable conversation that's going to probably bring up a lot of laughter and a lot of our good times. I think that's going to be an important part of my year, when we actually get a chance to do that.

For the time being, I'm excited to have another chance to play here in Cincy, to get to New York and to play there.

It's been a strange year for everyone, and I think particularly us Aussies. I don't think many, if any of us, have gone home this year. So I think even being able to share it with our direct teams on the road, there are a lot of our team members, our family members who are back in Australia who we probably haven't been able to connect and celebrate with as we'd like. I know there are a bunch of Aussies over here who are in the same boat, have had great results, and we're kind of almost just together and seeing each other on the road week in, week out.

So I think for me that's going to be a massive part of my year and almost probably the biggest debrief will be from that month through the UK.

But, yeah, I mean, a long way around, but probably no, not yet. But we will get there.

**Q. A couple of things. How important was it for you and the team to take the break in the Bahamas after Wimbledon? The second part is, are you fully fit at the moment? Because obviously we know that the actual injury issues and all that, all those details were kept from you going through Wimbledon, et cetera. So as I said, two parts: One, the refreshment of being in the Bahamas and clearing heads and recharging; and two, your physical state now going into this tournament and obviously the US Open.**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it was always a planned break from Wimbledon for us after, regardless of where we went or what the result was. That was always a planned time when we were going to have that period off. We just so happened to choose the Bahamas purely out of convenience flying direct from London and being able to not spend a whole day on a plane to really find some time where we could relax.

It was relaxing, but it was also a time where we were preparing for Tokyo and I think doing all of the necessary requirements with testing and paperwork, a lot of those things that we needed to do to get into Tokyo.

It was a bit of a strange holiday, in a sense, and break

where it felt like it went really quickly. I would have loved some more time, but we didn't quite have that luxury, which was more than okay.

Yeah, as for my injury, those details were kept from me. That was my choice. I asked my team not to tell me. I'm fit. I'm good. I'm pain-free. I'm ready to go play here in Cincinnati and throughout the American summer.

So I think I'm looking forward to now changing back to hard courts and kind of trying to find some rhythm and some groove, which it feels like it's been a long time since I've played on hard courts. Honestly, I mean Miami was my last hard court tournament, and the conditions there are vastly different to here. So I think it's going to take some time to adjust, without a doubt.

But we'll just keep chipping away and try and get ourselves the best chance each and every match.

**Q. With singles at the Olympics, I know you were pretty upset and disappointed with the way things turned out. Did that frustration last longer than you normally would after a loss, and did it get cleared with the bronze medal? If you could just maybe address that.**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I think the singles in Tokyo was a tough one. You know, I was quite quick to forget and move on from that one. I think for me I know that wasn't a true indication of who I am out on the tennis court. It was, I think, really positive, I wanted to play all three events in Tokyo. I wanted to win a medal for Australia, and that didn't matter in which form it kind of came in, whether it was singles, doubles, or mixed.

Stormy and I played a hell of a tournament. Johnny and I played a hell of a tournament. We were rewarded in the end. The singles didn't put a damper on the event at all. I was able to move on pretty quickly from that and forget that one and, yeah, not take too much out of it.

**Q. Were you disappointed not being able to get to some of the other events, not to see Steph Gilmore, who you know pretty well at the surfing? I'm not saying it took away from anything, but maybe, I don't know, how do you feel? How did you get on with that aspect?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I was able to see Steph in the Village, which was really nice. They came up the evening of the opening ceremony. It had been, yeah, a long time, probably December since I had last seen her.

I think that was probably one of my favorite hugs of the

whole event and kind of everything that happened after Wimbledon to be able to connect with her and share that with her. She knows what I have been through throughout my whole career. So to be able to have both of us there for our team back home was awesome.

I think even though all of the athletes, all of us, we weren't able to go all of the sports, it created an incredible vibe at our Australian headquarters where everyone was wrapped around the TVs, everyone was watching, supporting, and it almost brought us together more in the fact that we only had one place where we could watch everyone. It almost dragged us all there, and the vibe was pretty good.

**Q. A question about the Olympics, just being able to be in the Village, being able to be around other Aussie athletes, that vibe, I have to think from the time you left Australia, it might have been one of the only times that you've kind of been around that many Aussies and all that sort of stuff, but did it give you any sense at all as to what you had achieved at Wimbledon? After that, I know you're probably not on social media much, but the congratulations were rolling in from every corner of Aussie culture and lauding you. Did you get any sense of that once you were in the Village of being around other athletes? You'd just won Wimbledon.**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it was a bit of a strange feeling, I think. Being around so many other Aussies just created this incredible feeling of home and normalcy, I suppose. I even said to Tyzz, Wow, it's been a long time since we've heard Australian accents and just normal conversation.

That was really refreshing. That was really nice. I think to be able to spend time with other athletes and knowing how much time and effort they have put into their Olympic careers with that extra year on top of it. For a lot of our Aussie athletes, they held on for another year and had an incredible campaign. And for me to be able to see that created this real sense of togetherness and we are all united.

Even though I'm extremely fortunate to have support back home in Australia and all over the world, after Wimbledon was a crazy period. I think being around other athletes made it really normal. I think Aussies have this incredible ability of creating an equal playing field, everyone is equal. And I think at Aussie headquarters in the Village, that was a really strong sense of that.

Everyone was here to do their job, to enjoy each other's company, to cheer each other on. I think of all the countries, we had a really, really successful Olympic campaign, and I was really, really proud to be a small part of that.

**Q. I know how down-to-earth and humble you are, but did you realize that you were the hot ticket as far as selfies and autographs are concerned amongst Australians at the games? I can't remember which athlete it was who said, Oh, my God, she's actually responded to a comment I made on Twitter or something like that. Did you pick up on any of that? Not to say that you were bragging or boasting or anything, but that sort of warmth? And my other last question is you mentioned about a bottle of red on the table. What would it be? Grange? Hill of Grace? Which one would you go with?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I mean, at the Village, it was really cool. I loved the fact I could chuck my hat, my sunnies, and my mask on, and I felt like no one was going to recognize me. I think unfortunately a few of the athletes did.

No, it was cool to connect with a lot of different athletes from different disciplines, and for me to see some of the athletes who inspire me and continue to inspire youth all around the country was really cool.

Yeah, as for the bottle of red, I think I'll let Peersy, I'll let him decide on that one, he's got a good palate. I know whatever we drink it will be nice.

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