

# Western & Southern Open

Sunday, August 22, 2021

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

## Ashleigh Barty

Press Conference



A. BARTY/J. Teichmann

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THE MODERATOR: A great week for you, Ash. Just talk us through the match today and how you're feeling ahead of the US Open.

ASHLEIGH BARTY: It's been an awesome week. I felt like with each match we're getting progressively better and better in most parts of my game.

Today against Jil I feel like I was able to really trust myself and play with confidence, get after the ball, be aggressive and get a bit of a run on, which was going to be important in a big final.

I think we're just excited that we've got matches under our belt in tough conditions here in Cincy, and that's put us in really good stead going into New York.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Congrats on the win. Did you feel maybe taking a week off last week and not going to Montreal helped you more this week?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: It was always a plan for us to not play Montreal, particularly after the big load that came from Wimbledon and adding the Olympics on top of that. I think obviously I wanted to play the Olympic Games incredibly badly for me as a person, and for kind of my heart and to play for Australia is something that I never want to give up that opportunity.

I think then being just a little bit tired post that big month, it was important for me to know and listen to my body and take that rest, and it certainly put me in good stead this week.

**Q. How confident do you feel for New York the next few weeks?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, obviously it's different conditions. I love playing in New York. I love the vibe

that's there. I love the city itself.

I can't wait to get there. It's been a couple of years since we have been back in New York City. I'm excited to get there and do some of my favorite things outside of the tennis court. Certainly nice to get a few matches under my belt this week to feel like I'm ready to play in New York.

**Q. A pretty remarkable run for you this week. How are you feeling? What clicked for you this week to lead you to this point?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it's been a great week. I felt like all week long I wanted to be really aggressive, wanted to get up after my serve. I felt like these conditions were going to reward good serving and good first-strike tennis.

Even though that's not necessarily my repertoire all the time, I felt like I wanted to push myself this week to try and be more assertive on my serve. I felt like particularly in return games I was able to build pressure, and over time that was able to wear down my opponents.

It's just been a great week of tennis all in all, and certainly really exciting for us to come away with the title.

**Q. Your first title here at the Western & Southern Open, how are you feeling sitting next to your hardware there? How excited are you?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it's a beauty, this trophy. Obviously a couple years ago we made semifinal here. I have some of my best memories here playing in Cincy. My first top-10 win. So to now add a title to those really nice memories is really cool.

**Q. Congrats on your win today. You have beaten three Grand Slam champions this week: Kerber, Azarenka, Krejčíková. You were serving very well through all this week. Talk about your serve. There is a lot of matches that you even faced a breakpoint in a lot of these matches.**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I put a lot of emphasis on my serve. I have since I was quite young. I always wanted to

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have a good serve, a serve that I could trust, both my first and my second serve.

It's a lot of practice. I have hit a lot a lot of serves over my career. Even though I'm not the tallest girl out there, I feel like I'm able to use my serve as a weapon and then set up the structure of the points and how I want to play my tennis. I think that's always a big thing is not always getting free points off serve but then being able to set up the structure of the point and get it back on my terms and look for forehands. I think that's a big part of my game.

**Q. My second question is I read last year about your beautiful work with Tennis Australia with Indigenous kids in Australia, bringing tennis to them. I'd like to know how is it going by now and how much you can inspire these kids and how much they can inspire you, as well?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, the Indigenous tennis youth coming through in Australia is something that's very close to my heart. I think of my friend, my idol, Evonne Goolagong, she inspired me to pick up a tennis racquet, and she has inspired so many Indigenous young athletes around our country to play tennis and to become educated.

For me, to be a small part of that in bringing up the next generation of Indigenous youth is really incredible. It's not just about picking up a tennis racquet and learning the sport. It's about becoming educated, about life, educated with their school, and being able to provide them opportunities all around the country, not just in big cities but in communities and in rural places, as well, to give the Indigenous kids of our next generation the opportunity to learn and to discover that their dreams are possible.

It's important to dream big, it's important to put your hopes and dreams out into the universe, and you never know what might just happen. To set up a foundation for them and a pathway for them to follow is really important.

**Q. For you, you seem to be following Gong in breaking down some records. Wimbledon was one, and then now here. Were you aware she was the last Australian woman to win this in 1973?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I wasn't, no. I mean, there are photos of Evonne around the site here, and particularly down near the locker rooms. It's obviously very special that we are becoming more and more connected throughout tennis history and not just our heritage. But it's really cool to be able to almost bring our stories together a little bit.

I'm incredibly proud to be an Indigenous woman, and I know Evonne is too. To be able to now share our heritage

for the whole world to see on a sporting stage is really neat. It's amazing how many cool, little, I would say quirky anniversaries we have together and we share together, whether they are years and years apart or at tournaments, and that's really cool.

**Q. You just were saying how much you're looking forward to getting into New York. What will your preparation be like, or how much practice will you engage in in the days leading up to the start of play? What might be some of the things that you like to do in New York that you will work or try to do?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Well, I think first and foremost we have to get there safely. Obviously there is a storm on the East Coast at the moment up New York way, so I think we'll get to New York whenever we can in the next day or so, and then we'll have a couple of quiet days before we start knocking down and getting stuck into practice.

Our practice weeks before Grand Slams are quite normal. There is nothing fancy, no extra emphasis on anything. It's just gauged by how I'm feeling physically, how I'm feeling mentally, and we have had a lot of practice now as a team in being able to read each other and what we think is required, and then it's about going out there for the first round, whether it's the Monday or Tuesday, and try to do the best that I can. That's all I can ask of myself.

I know this preparation leading up through Cincinnati has been good, but that doesn't guarantee anything. It's a fresh start, a clean slate. We approach next week in that fashion where we're starting again, adjusting, adapting to conditions, and trying to do the best we can in that first opportunity and that first hurdle.

We'll just do the best we can, and then in the time that we have off, when we're not practicing, for me I keep it pretty lighthearted. I visit a few Aussie cafes, walk through Central Park and just try and connect a little bit with what is normal for me in a city that's pretty big and in your face at times, but certainly an energy that I love.

**Q. Congratulations. It's obviously been a long stretch for you, but you're still able to do really well. I'm wondering, when you hit the road back in March, did you imagine you'd be able to still be performing at this level entering the US Open?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I hoped. I really did hope, and I think that we have certainly had weeks where we have been more flat. We have had weeks where I have struggled physically, mentally. But that's normal. That all comes with being a professional athlete.

I have said time and time again how lucky I am and how fortunate I am to have a great team of people around me. There have been times where they have needed to pick me up. There have been times where they have created this really light, fun environment for me to feel like I'm a kid again. And all in all, we know how to communicate with each and we know how to bring out the best in each other when it matters most.

This week it was completely nonresult-focused. It was about preparing in the best way possible, knowing that we wanted to be ready for New York in a couple weeks' time.

Now that we've only got a week in between, we have played plenty of matches, and now it's about kind of refining as best we can to hopefully be feeling good come the first round in New York and just try and do the best that we can there.

**Q. I'm curious, because you're someone who has shown a lot of consistency. I'm wondering, your mentality after winning your first slam, you went and won a tournament. Now you won Wimbledon, you went and won a tournament. Can you compare how you dealt with each slam win mentally to make sure that you're still pumped up and keep going without feeling pressure?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: They are very, very different. I think in 2019 in Paris obviously it was the first and probably the most unexpected, not just of which Grand Slam but kind of getting over that hurdle of winning a Grand Slam. I think that took a lot out of me physically and emotionally.

Then almost the re-energizing factor in post-French Open I think was the grass, and I was just genuinely excited that I wanted to play another good grass court season. That's always a dangling carrot for me. That month in the middle of the year that we get on grass is always re-energizing, refreshing. I feel connected to the ground, I feel connected to the grass courts.

I think that was a very different feeling to what was post-Wimbledon this year. Post-Wimbledon I was completely depleted. It was my biggest goal, my biggest dream was to win that one tournament, and it was almost after that I was just a bit numb and I didn't really know what to feel. I think I still have a bit of that now, but being able to again refresh and refocus and think we're moving to hard court season, it's a fresh kind of start, almost trying to segment that a bit more, but also not put pressure on myself, because past results guarantee nothing.

There are no certainties in sport, no certainties in tennis. It's just about playing each and every day as best you can

as they come and not focusing or concerning yourself or your self-worth with results.

**Q. Do you have any plans tonight to celebrate the win?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: No, Mate. We're trying to figure out how we're going to fly to New York, and that's about all.

I think pretty quiet one for us. We'll just have a dinner whenever we get back to the hotel, and, nah, pretty quiet one.

**Q. Just considering what you said a moment ago about Wimbledon and it was the title that you have always wanted from very young, having achieved that, in one sense does, for want of another expression, that take the monkey off your back and everything now is gravy, and while you're still numb, as you say, about having won that, it's also a case of you may be more relaxed?**

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I think there was never an expectation that I would win it or, I mean, like you say, for no better expression, a monkey on my back, to feel like I was entitled to Wimbledon. I never felt that. But I felt like I had the opportunity.

It was my dream. I think kind of still not sure what I'm feeling now. I think it will maybe hit home a bit more once I'm actually home with my friends and family and get to share it with all of my wider team, but it's also been a really important process for me to try and decompress and debrief, chat it through with Tyzz, chat it through with my team that's here, and try and figure it out, because it was a hell of a fortnight, a hell of a journey. There were a lot of external distractions that came with it.

But I loved every moment. There is a lot of it I don't remember, I wish that I could, but through the help of chatting to my team, we will remember all of it. Yeah, I think for me it's almost, it's a bonus obviously that I was able to win Wimbledon, it was a bonus now that I get to continue to do what I love, and we just keep chipping away, we keep trying to get better every single day as a tennis player. If that means more titles, that's great. If it doesn't, it doesn't. That doesn't matter for me.

I think being able to continually self-improve, not just as a person but as an athlete, as well, is still my biggest focus and priority.

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