

# Western & Southern Open

Wednesday, August 17, 2022

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

## Ben Shelton

### Press Conference



B. SHELTON/C. Ruud

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THE MODERATOR: Congrats a lot, Ben. It's your first top-5 player win and your second Masters 1000 win. How do you feel right now?

BEN SHELTON: I feel great definitely in exciting atmosphere out there. I'm glad to be moving on and happy to be here, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Originally you got a qualifying wildcard here, and then you made the finals last weekend at the challenger. Was there a time where you thought you weren't going to get to play in this, because that kind of overlapped?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I thought it was going to be one or the other. I definitely wanted to do really well in Chicago, and if that meant I wasn't able to play here then I was going to be okay with that.

I got lucky, and Eric Butorac gave me a chance. Really grateful to Cincinnati. It's been great here.

**Q. How would you sort of describe what you are finding at this ATP level this summer?**

BEN SHELTON: I'm finding that everybody out here is a great player. The margins are definitely really small in every match between players, so I think that the little details, preparation, how you take care of your body is really important and it makes a huge difference.

**Q. You looked very composed on the court. Does it feel normal to you to be here right now playing against No. 5 in the world?**

BEN SHELTON: No (smiling). I think you've got to fake it till you make it, right? If I'm not feeling completely comfortable at the beginning, I'm going to do my best to show that I am until I find myself in a place where I am

settled in.

Once I got into the second set today, I wasn't hardly even thinking about it. I was just trying to play my game and execute my game plan.

I'm finding it an easier time the more I'm in these situations, getting my heart rate down and feeling more calm on the court.

**Q. Have you gotten to a point yet where you know what type of court speeds suit you best, what type of court suits you best? Are you at that stage yet?**

BEN SHELTON: I have never played a tournament on red clay and never played a tournament on grass, so I'd say that I'm not quite sure yet (smiling).

I like playing on hard court, but that's all I have played on. The courts here, I like them a lot. They're pretty fast, but I enjoy a slow hard court, as well. Any type of hard court I'm okay with.

**Q. I spoke to your dad downstairs a few minutes ago, and he told me that he never made it out of the second round here. Do you take a lot of pride knowing that you already got further than your dad?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, a little bit (smiling). I know that he has two top-5 wins and I only have one. He's got me in that category.

But, yeah, it's fun to talk about. It's cool that I have a former pro who's my dad to look up to when I'm going through these things.

**Q. You played Casper who is another person who has a father who was on tour as well. What kind of advantages or insights do you think that gives you?**

BEN SHELTON: I think from growing up, they know kind of what it takes to make it. They know that there is not a quick fix to making it on tour, that it's a long process.

There is a lot of things growing up, hard things that you can

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skip if you deal with the right way. I see that a lot of the former pros are more processed-based rather than quick results. I think that's one thing that former pros or at least my dad in my experience has taught me, to trust the process and don't be looking for quick, good results.

**Q. Very few former pros actually sort of encourage their kids to go into tennis. Do you have any idea why that is, why it's so rare?**

BEN SHELTON: I think they know how difficult it is, how grueling it is, mentally challenging. Being a tennis parent isn't the easiest thing. It's a lot.

Yeah, my dad definitely didn't push me into tennis. I played mostly football until seventh or eighth grade. But he was definitely happy when I decided that I wanted to play, but he was totally open to me playing a lot of different sports.

**Q. Do you know what his top 5 wins are?**

BEN SHELTON: I don't. Michael Stich. I think he was top 5...

**Q. He was at one point.**

BEN SHELTON: ...yeah, when he beat him. I'm not sure of the other one.

**Q. What made you choose tennis over football?**

BEN SHELTON: Right. When I got to my time to decide, a couple things went into it. I saw that my dad was a college coach and knew a lot about the game. My chances of going far in the sport and having that resource was definitely going to be helpful.

The other thing, I grew kind of late, so going into the end of middle school, there was a lot of huge kids in football and I hadn't really hit my growth spurt yet. I was maybe a little tired of getting bashed up all the time (smiling).

**Q. Cam Norrie is another guy that came through the collegiate system here in the States. He went back for a third year and then turned pro. What do you know about his process in that time frame for him, and what do you take from what he's been able to do in terms of how it will affect your career?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah. From all I have heard, he kept his head down and just kept working. The process wasn't super fast, like a quick jump straight into the top 100 or straight into the top 20, but he took his time and kept developing his game.

He got to a place where now he's competing for slams and all these ATP titles. So I think it's encouraging to see that even a guy who is almost top 10 now is going to take some losses. It's going to take a little bit of a while to get there and it's not going to be an exact science, and there is going to be adjustments that I have to make over the next few years.

I'm excited for the journey, and I know that I'm not going to be there right away.

**Q. Who did you sort of look up to watching tennis, the pros? Anyone especially?**

BEN SHELTON: I definitely looked up to Fed. Nadal is the clear choice because I'm a lefty, as well. I liked kind of the classiness of Fed, the aura around him and the way he carries himself on court in victory and defeat.

He was kind of like a good role model on the court, off the court, how he handled the press, just a class act. I definitely enjoyed watching him play tennis growing up.

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