

# BNP Paribas Open

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

## Ben Shelton

Press Conference



B. SHELTON/B. Nakashima

7-6, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Well, well done, Ben. What were you most excited with today with your match?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, a lot of things I thought I did well out there. For me, the one biggest thing is how I returned, how many returns I was able to put in play against a really, really good server. Obviously I have always had close sets with him, always tough to get a lead and kind of pull away.

That second set was really encouraging for me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Nine sets against him and you have won each one of them. Apart from that last set, every other one had been either 7-5 or 7-6. Why do you think you were able to run away with that second set today?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I made a small adjustment on my return of serve. I thought that I did a great job mixing up my position so he wasn't exactly sure where the ball was coming or how it was coming.

For me, he has an amazing slider serve. He can open up the angles really well, and I thought I did a great job cutting off those angles today.

It's not always black and white returning well and being able to come away with a set like that, but for me, just playing with energy and being focused all the way through, which sometimes in the past I have struggled with, staying focused the whole time, was big from me.

**Q. Speaking of that second set, how important is it for you to keep that momentum and capitalize? Is it something that you work on?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, for me, I feel like when I get out front, I'm kind of like a freight train. It's tough to stop me. But at the same time, I like the feeling of comebacks. I also feel like I'm pretty solid after losing the first set and

being able to win that second set no matter what happens in the third.

It's not always straightforward. Tennis is never going to be straightforward. Sometimes you're winning a lot of first sets and you're finishing it in two, and sometimes you're fighting for your life in the third or fifth set. It's just kind of the way things go.

I think staying in a mindset where you are okay with whatever happens when you do get down at times, you're okay with making a comeback, or, you know, being patient if the guy is playing really, really well and not start pressing outside your limits. I think it's really important just how you handle those moments mentally.

**Q. I would imagine you think you're playing your best tennis since Australia at this point?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah.

**Q. What is it, as you look back over the last month, is it just sort of takes a little time after a big event like that to get going again? Niggles you're working out or just anything that has come around in your game that wasn't there early in February perhaps at some of the smaller events?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, for me it's mostly mental. I'd say a little bit in Dallas it felt pretty soon after Australia. I didn't feel like I had time to chill after getting back home, and hindsight is 20/20, but I probably would have waited a little bit later to play.

You know, I thought I played okay in Acapulco. I just didn't feel I was at my best mentally. I didn't feel like I was being as tough as I should in the big moments. I felt like I was more irritable than normal, which obviously really hot conditions that I wasn't really used to because it wasn't hot in Australia either this year.

Yeah, I just wasn't where I wanted to be mentally. I think that some weeks you have it; some weeks you don't. For me, I'm trying to figure out how to have it more and more weeks.



Obviously in the past I have had some big results and it would be a while between my big results, and I'm just trying to be a little bit more consistent with my preparation, a little bit more consistent with the things that I can control.

The results may be there, may not be there, but I think I give myself a much better chance when I'm doing what I'm doing this week in terms of how calm I'm staying on the court, my body language, my preparation, how I am on the practice court, you know, and I think those are all things that I knew I was going to play well this week because all those things were there.

**Q. As you take in this knowledge, do you anticipate you'll factor that in to your sort of post Grand Slam scheduling? I know there is nothing you can do after the French Open, kind of have to get ready on the grass. But, you know, next year after Australia, this year after Wimbledon and after the US Open in terms of, okay, these are things I feel like I need?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, it's tough. Everybody is different. I feel like I'm that guy who can benefit from a training block. I also feel that my second or third tournament in a swing is usually my best. Probably second (smiling). You know, it's tough. We have a lot of mandatory events. We have a lot of swings where it's, like, okay, am I going to go home now or just keep playing? Am I going to go back from Europe again?

So I don't always see the clear answer of how I build my schedule and how many events I want to play without getting fined. But, yeah, I think that's something that I will continue to learn about myself and figure out.

**Q. Knocking on the door of top 10. Is that the No. 1 priority right at this moment? Is there any sort of time frame that you and your dad have sat down and thought, considered, as far as making that jump in there?**

BEN SHELTON: No. Honestly, I don't look at the rankings at all. I think about the race. I think about my body of work from January 1 and where I can be at the end of the year, and that's pretty much it.

I don't think about defending points. I don't think about points coming off from the year before. It's just, like, everybody has the same 12 months, same tournaments to play, same amount of work. Let's see where we are in November.

**Q. Your kick on this surface, is this the most bounce you get compared to, say, a sunny day in Roland**

**Garros?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, it's tough for me. I feel like I'm hitting my kick serve, one of the best I have hit in my life right now. Maybe 2022 Cincinnati competes with it (smiling).

But for me, there are certain tournaments in the past where I just haven't been grooved with it and it hasn't come off. Even the courts that feel the most bouncy and the most lively, I just haven't been using it as much, because I just haven't been getting the sideways bounce that I want.

For me, I feel really confident going after the kick over and over if I can really stretch them with it. It's just jumping up straight, guys can move back far enough and rope that forehand. If I can send it into the side fence, then I feel a little bit more comfortable using it.

I have that spot pretty dialed in right now, so I have been able to give myself the opportunity to hit it so many times that I feel like I'm getting the most production out of it that I can.

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