

Yarra Valley Classic

Sunday, 7 February 2021

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Ashleigh Barty

Press Conference



A. BARTY/G. Muguruza

7-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Probably first time you've got a trophy with a wombat on it, I assume.

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, very cool. Obviously when you talk about how the trophy is made, a very touching almost tribute to my heritage, and very cool to have some indigenous art, pure art, as a trophy is very cool.

Q. You would have had a number of things you wanted to tick off this week. How many off the checklist have you been able to tick off?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, there's a checklist yes and no. Obviously we want to stick to our processes and get the right things in place, try and do the right things right from the get-go. I feel we were able to do that, particularly today. It was some of the better tennis I played throughout the whole week. Garbine forced me to play at that level. It was a great final.

Yeah, happy with the progression of the level of tennis through the week.

Q. There would have been times during the year where you were at home, the circuit was going on, you were doing things like playing golf, watching footy. You may have been worried you get to the Australian Open and there may not be crowds there, may not be an Australian Open. How concerned were you?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, we're extremely grateful to have the opportunity to play. I think it was a decision that ultimately was out of our hands. It was going to be made by the right people, you know, the government, the health chief officer, all of these people who were making it as safe as possible for us to be here and to play. We're very grateful as a playing group to have the opportunity.

Throughout the year, there probably wasn't a lot of thought towards that. Knowing it's not my decision, it makes me sleep a little bit easier at night. But very

happy to be here now and have the opportunity to do what I love again.

Q. Was there doubt that crept into your head about whether you'd be able to play at this level this quickly?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yes and no. There's always a little bit of the unknown. I certainly get confidence from the work that I do off the court during pre-season with my team. Not necessarily hit the panic button if we don't get a win straightaway.

I think for us it's doing the work, sticking to our processes and sticking to our routines that we know work. They're not always going to bring the results. If you go about it the right way, make the right decisions for the right reasons, you know you're putting yourself in good stead.

Q. When it comes to a home slam, do you feel any more pressure than in the other slams? If so, is the pressure external or internal?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: There's no extra pressure for me, that's for sure. It's the same whether it's a Grand Slam or a first level of a tour event, any other match. I think the extra pressure and the extra chatter comes from you guys. That's not really my concern. It doesn't change the way that I prepare or I play.

I think for me, regardless of what tournament it is, what match it is, what court, the routine and the preparation is all the same. That's how I know that I bring out my best stuff.

Q. The top contenders for the Australian Open pulled out of matches leading in. Now you're winning tournaments leading in. How important are lead-up tournaments?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Every player is unique. Every single player prepares in a different way. For me, I love the opportunity of playing at home. I love playing in Australia. I feel like if there's a tournament here, I grab it with both hands and try to do the best that I can.

Of course, I mean, getting matches under your belt is important, particularly after an extended period off for me. Any time I get to play at home, I love to play in

Australia, and I love to play in front of my friends and family and try to prepare as best as I can that way leading into the Australian Open.

Q. You obviously won your lead-in tournament last year, and this year. Do you feel like you're better prepared this year than you were last year going into the AO? Where do you feel like you're at?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: It's very different. I think the circumstances and the situation is extremely different. Both are unique. I'm just trying to come out here and do the best that I can. I've done the preparation. I've eaten my Brussels sprouts, done everything to put myself in a position that I can go out there and perform at the best level I can.

For me, I go into this Australian Open excited, well-prepared, ready to play. Then we just see what happens come that first match. We focus on that first match, try to do the best that we can, then we go from there.

Q. She's obviously a super aggressive player, but the stats said you had twice as many winners. How much do you think that had to do with your switch in your time off to natural gut? How much did that bring to your game?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, the change to half natural gut in the crosses was something I always wanted to do but never really had the time to learn how to play with gut properly. There's still a little bit of an adjustment.

I think today I had to try and neutralize as best I can, then get on the front foot as soon as I could. It's not always just about the tennis sometimes, it's about how you can control the court.

I felt like I moved great today and was able to squeeze the court a lot of the times, make Garbine press a little bit, which was an important part of the match.

Overall it was a pretty solid performance. I'm still my harshest critic at times. That's the challenge of sport every day, is trying to get better and better.

Q. In terms of some of the other adjustments you made, putting those to the test against Shelby and today against Garbine, how important was that to hold up in pressure moments? Looking ahead to the Australian Open, your first round opponent, what do you know about her?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I mean, it's a big challenge. It's a different challenge every day. Obviously conditions with the roof closed changes things as well. It's been a brilliant week in a sense. We've been tested against different opponents, different conditions, different times

of the day. Almost everything in a way has been thrown at me this week. There have been challenges to overcome. We've been able to do that.

That doesn't change for us come Tuesday against our opponent. We go out there and we do the research. I chat to Tyz beforehand. We try to bring the match to my hand as quickly as possible and as often as possible.

Q. How well placed do you feel in terms of being a contender amongst the favorites this year? A bit of talk about your draw being a favorable one.

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I feel exactly as the other 127 girls that are playing. We're all in the same draw. I think when the draw predictions are done, I don't think one's ever come true in the entirety of tennis. We'll just see how the draw pans out.

For me, my focus is on my first round come Tuesday. We look forward to a new challenge, a different opponent. That's all I can worry about. That's all I can focus on, is do the right things for me, do the right things for my team, then we move from there.

Q. The obligatory Chris O'Neil question. You played down the expectations, but do you feel some responsibility in some ways, someone that has got to the top of the game, that drought is weighing on the country, does it come into your mind there's a real opportunity to end that?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: No, no, no.

Q. Talking through the match a little bit, it felt like every point was really huge, a bit of a seesaw, especially the first set. Talk through what you thought was the key in neutralizing her game today.

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I think Garbine is an exceptional frontrunner. It was important for me today when she did get a couple of those early breaks in the first set is not to let her run away with it, respond instantly.

The focus is on every single individual point, trying to return as best that I can for that point. That's all you can do is one point at a time. Very cliché. That's the only way you can work through a match.

It was important for me today to really do that well. Did that probably better than I've done throughout the whole week. That was a really positive reflection coming out of the matches that we did that exceptional well. When push game to shove, those big moments, I was clear, I knew what I wanted to do, I just had to execute.

Q. From the very beginning you had a tremendous first service game, three aces right off the bat. Could

you tell from the beginning that it looked like you were going to be on today against Garbine? Did you feel you were in pretty good form for your first week back?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it's a tricky one I think because we try and play each point, as I just said, on its merit, do the right thing for each individual point. That's all I can focus on. Not think about that today is going to be my day or not. It's about going out there with the right attitude and trying to bring things your way instantly.

I wanted to be really clear with how I wanted to play. Obviously that first service game was a good one. But you're not going to get every single service game like that. It's about managing the whole match throughout, but just trying to play each individual point as best you can.

Q. You played some good opponents this week. Does this put you in a good frame coming off of a good week looking ahead to the Open on Tuesday?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, this week I played some great opponents, produced some really good tennis. I think that's a positive thing, is that every challenge that was thrown at me this week, we were able to find a way through, find a way to problem solve, work our way through.

That's what we try and do every single day. In an individual sport, when it's a one-on-one, you're trying in a way to play chess, outmove your opponent.

I think for me that's something I really enjoy about tennis. It's certainly very nice to be back testing myself against the best in the world.

Q. Can you reflect briefly on the last sort of 12, 13 months as a whole. It hasn't been like many others on the tour. What do you think was good or bad about your situation? Would you change anything if you had the time again?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Absolutely no regrets for me. I felt like it's been a challenging 12 months for everyone all across the world. Everyone has been in a very different, unique situation, depending on what country they're in, even what state here in Australia.

I feel very fortunate to have had the year that I have had. Certainly none of my decisions have any regret. I made the right decisions for the right reasons. I enjoyed my time at home this year. There was nothing but positive vibes and good feelings coming out of the whole year for me.

Now I'm really happy to be back playing tennis with an opportunity to play in front of a crowd here at the

Australian Open. It's really special.

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