

# Brisbane International

Saturday, 30 December 2023

Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

## Ben Shelton

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Ben, you've actually had a really good year 2023. What are your goals you've set for yourself this year?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I definitely have a lot of things that I hope to learn from last year and improve on, hopefully do better this year.

In terms of results-based goals, I definitely have a lot of things that I've talked to my team about that I want to accomplish. I'd rather keep those between me and my team. I feel like in the media, if your goals are too shallow or too high, you get ripped for it. Those goals are for me and my team.

Yeah, we'll see how I do this year.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

#### **Q. What are your fond memories a year on from last year, especially the Australian Open?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, definitely a lot of great memories from Australia last year. I haven't been to Brisbane or this far north in Australia before. I'd say it's a little bit hotter than the other places that I've been. You can see I'm still sweating from hitting a couple minutes ago (smiling).

But, yeah, I think last year was really cool for me because this was my first big stage that I got to play on here in Australia. We kind of joked about it with my team and my family that I was bigger in Australia than in the U.S. at the start of my career (smiling).

I really love the fans here. The atmosphere at the tournaments is really, really cool and special. I'm hoping to get some more of that this year.

#### **Q. You spoke about the humidity out there. I imagine going to college in Florida you feel comfortable in these conditions.**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, definitely feel comfortable playing in the heat. Used to the humidity, going through shirts, that type of thing.

We just came from winter in Florida, and it was a cooler



winter than normal. Taken a few days to adjust to the heat. I'm starting to feel good here again in Australia.

Yeah, it's something that I'm used to. Once I get going, I'm comfortable with.

#### **Q. The hard court Grand Slams last year, deep runs. Got to make you feel good come into this part of the season. Anything you particularly learnt from those last year that you want to use this year?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, it's definitely a unique opportunity to play at the hard court Grand Slams 'cause it's a surface that I've played on my whole life and I'm comfortable with, compared to the red clay and grass court, my first time playing on both surfaces last year.

Being able to play throughout five sets, you have some time to figure things out on the court. You don't have to be perfect right off the bat. I don't have the type of game where I'm just perfect positioning, perfect ball striking every single shot from the first point.

It's nice to have some more time in Grand Slams to figure things out on the court. Yeah, I think I learned a lot in playing five matches at the Australian Open last year and six at the US Open. That just kind of speaks to where my fitness levels are at, how far I can go.

Yeah, definitely just focusing on Brisbane, this first week right now, getting some good preparation, and hopefully a few matches here.

#### **Q. How different does the start of this season feel compared to the start of last season when you were almost starting out really?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I feel a little more calm, more prepared. I know how things work a little bit more. I feel like I belong a little more. I just know more people. Things are a bit easier than they were last year.

I was telling somebody yesterday that experiencing jet lag for the first time last year, I was in a pretty bad spot for nine or 10 days. I felt horrible and couldn't get over it. This year, after two days I felt pretty normal, so...

I think it's crazy to think about the change in my life one year ago to now, but yeah, I've definitely come a long way.



**Q. What was the emotion as you start a new season? Is it excitement or nerves...**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I'm really excited. It was kind of a cool reset to have some time at home, be able to work on some things. Obviously it's a long season. I'd never been away from home that long before in a year. So to be able to have some time at home, think of the things that I want to try to accomplish in 2024, I'm really excited for what's to come.

Not really any nerves. I just want to focus on having a good body of work from January to November, and we'll see where we are in November.

**Q. You spoke about the idea of being more popular in Australia. How are you going to handle this week being popular? Are you going to embrace the hype?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I think it just depends on who you play here in Brisbane. If I play an Aussie, maybe it's when I walked on John Cain last year against Popyrin and everybody was booing me at the start of the match.

No, I'm really excited. I feel like the crowds bring a lot of energy. I've never been to Brisbane before. Every other place in Australia, the crowds have been really rowdy. That's an environment I really enjoy. Whether I'm popular here and cheering for me or whether they're cheering for the other guy, I don't mind either way.

BEN SHELTON: I just like playing in environments that I feel like big matches. I've kind of been able to get used to that type of environment throughout the year last year as the year went on.

Yeah, I'm looking forward to it.

**Q. You spoke about feeling like you belong a bit more out there. I saw you looking comfortable today slinging the football around. Can you talk us through that sense of belonging?**

BEN SHELTON: I don't know if it has really anything to do with results. More just being out here on tour, being around the dining hall or the locker room more, having more friends that you talk to throughout the day. Going about your business, just your team, is how I felt maybe a year ago. Outside of the Americans, I didn't know anybody. I hadn't played juniors. I hadn't traveled at all before.

I'd say it has to do a little bit more with just the interactions with different people rather than feeling confident with my game on the court.

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