

# Brisbane International

Sunday, 31 December 2023

Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

## Sloane Stephens

Press Conference



S. STEPHENS/K. Siniakova

7-5, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Sloane, great way to start off your 2024 season. Do you want to talk us through the match and how you feel afterwards?

SLOANE STEPHENS: Yeah, it was obviously a good match. Always really tough starting the year. Just don't really know what's going to happen, so I think being able to come here and get a win was really nice. Really proud of that performance. Yeah, just ready to get the season started. Yeah, good signs so far.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Sloane, heading into the new year, good time to sort of talk about goals for the year. Do you have any that you are willing to share for this year?**

SLOANE STEPHENS: Yeah, stay healthy. Hopefully more performances like those. Just try to be a little bit more consistent this season and just really enjoy it.

I don't really have any goals that are I would say ranking-based or tournament-based, but very much just enjoying my tennis. When I do that, I think good things happen. I'm just going to go with that and not focus too much on a particular thing or tournament or ranking.

**Q. What pleased you the most about that match today?**

SLOANE STEPHENS: I just was very calm, just played within myself. I didn't get too frustrated. Obviously, like I said, the first tournament of the year can be really tough. You haven't played that many matches. You're coming off of a long training block. It's just a lot of different things.

I was just pleased that I was able to stay tough and not get frustrated and just keep playing and, yeah, come out with a win.

**Q. Elise Mertens is next. Any thoughts on that match?**

SLOANE STEPHENS: We played at the end of last year in San Diego. We played a good match. Yeah, looking forward to it.

Like I said, no one has played for a long time. It will be her first match, my second. I'm just going to go out there again and give it my best and see what happens.

**Q. How do you enjoy competing in Australia?**

SLOANE STEPHENS: It's great. I've always enjoyed my time here. Had one of my best results here in Australia. Yeah, it's always been good to me.

Obviously always starting the season is here where the weather is good, and you're coming from home where it's not that great, probably cold, whatever. So always coming here, and it's the middle of summer. It's very hot most of the time, but when the days are nice, it's a nice place to play and a nice place to be.

**Q. You said that the first hit out of the year can be a bit of rust and such as well. What sort of boxes were you looking to tick off, aside from win obviously? What was sort of the boxes you were looking to tick off for this first hit out, and did you feel you did that?**

SLOANE STEPHENS: Yeah, definitely. I knew that I wanted to stay really consistent. I knew that there were going to be some weird things that happened. There's like a weird point in the match where I misstepped and whiffed the ball. I was, like, How did that happen? Just things that happen when you play the first match of the year. Just things.

I was pleased that I was able to just stay consistent and not get frustrated. During the off-season I worked a lot on my serve, so I was happy with that today.

Yeah, just more ball placement, moving the ball around, and my game plan that I wanted to execute today I was able to. So it was consistent and not frustrating, which was nice.

Yeah, obviously every match isn't going to be like that, but I think if I can kind of keep that consistency throughout the year, I'll be pleased with that.

**Q. It looked like the first set was a bit of a grind, and then you really did start finding a bit more footing. Is**



**that sort of how you felt as well, that you were just building the momentum, the more you win?**

SLOANE STEPHENS: It's always tough. I was up 4-1 in the first set. Then it was 4-all, and I was serving. You get into those little dips, and you just have to stay focused.

I was just pleased that I was able to stay focused and not get too rattled because obviously I know that I didn't do anything wrong or terribly disastrous. It was just she was playing well, and I just needed to regroup.

Yeah, just, like I said, first match of the season.

**Q. I guess now being able to reflect on all of 2023 now that we're on the last day of it, how do you sort of assess the way your last couple of years have gone? There were a few years there without a title. Then you broke that last year. Now you've gone to this year working into the Australian Open. How are you feeling about the form leading into that?**

SLOANE STEPHENS: Good. You never really know what the season is going to bring. You can only do your best to have a good off-season and come out as best you can.

Obviously here in Australia obviously the first slam of the year being in Melbourne, it comes up fairly quick. The people who are prepared the best or who had the best off-season normally do pretty well.

Yeah, I would say that I did my best to have a good off-season this year, and I made it a little bit longer. I took more time off. I did what my body was probably asking of me.

Now that I'm getting older, obviously things look very different. Being able to really just focus on myself and my tennis for, like, three months was good. It was fun. It was interesting, but it was a good time. I hope that this year the results will show.

**Q. I guess when you said you listened to the body a little more, were there some niggles and that sort of stuff, or was it more just --**

SLOANE STEPHENS: Oh, yeah, there's always something wrong with me, but I'm getting older. Yeah, I just put off some health things, and I was able to go home and focus on it and focus on myself and try to get my body in the best shape possible and try to get my mental in the best place possible to be able to come out and play a full season and try to stay healthy.

I just tried to put everything in place so that I could make that happen for myself this season and see where that gets me.

**Q. I guess with that change intact as well, I suppose since that really great semifinal run that you had here, there's been a run of first round exits there. Do you think that change in tactic can really change things for you at the Australian Open this time around?**

SLOANE STEPHENS: Yeah, maybe. We'll see. We'll see in a few weeks. I mean, obviously coming into Australia I've always played a super long season and then been injured for the beginning of the season and just played through.

Obviously not the smartest thing, but when there's fines and there's pressure to play, you just go and you play; right? It's probably not the best thing, but you just do it anyway.

I think now after Guadalajara, I'm like, Okay, I'm done, it is what it is. I think I was able to focus on myself and just try to figure out what works for me and what works best for me.

Like I said, we'll see in a few weeks if that worked.

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