

Brisbane International

Monday, 5 January 2026

Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Kimberly Birrell

Press Conference



K. BIRRELL/R. Sramkova

6-4, 3-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Congrats on the win. How does it feel to get that one under your belt?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Feels really good. I'm super happy to start up the year, well, firstly playing here, I just love it so much, and also to feel like I played well. Yeah, it's a great feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. First real hit out in 2026 in front of the home fans. What does it mean to be playing in front of Queensland fans?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, it means a lot. I probably sound like a broken record, but yeah, just to get to play a tournament so close to where I grew up, and I trained half on the Gold Coast, half here in Brisby, so I know these corridors and these courts very well.

And just to see so many familiar faces in the crowd, obviously I was a little bit nervous starting out there today, but yeah, I think I just really feel the support, and it gives me that extra little boost of belief in myself, and I hope everyone knows how much I enjoy it.

Q. Was it nerves at the start? You sort of went down 3-0 in the opening set. Was it nerves at the start that was holding you back?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: I mean, probably a little bit. It's been a little while since I have played a singles match. I guess I was just sort of finding my feet and probably just finding the balance of not missing but also going for my shots.

I think maybe I was a little bit too within myself at the beginning, and I sort of just tried to tell myself to keep believing and, you know, to put what I have practiced into, yeah, into the points.

But, I think especially looking at the speedometer of my serve, I felt like I could go for a little bit more, so yeah, that's what I tried to do. I think my ball speed picked up,

and that helped.

Q. On your serve, you were at 80% today. That has to be a huge boost to getting you the win.

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, definitely. I have been working on my serve quite a bit in the last month or so, so it feels really good just to, yeah, find that on the match court. And really, what I have been working on, putting that into play, it means a lot.

Yeah, it's exciting. I think I'm just really pumped to start off the year on a good note, and hopefully I can continue it.

Q. What did you work on in your serve to be able to get it up so high? You had really good levels today.

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Thank you. Well, I think it started towards the end of last year and had a little bit of a moment where I was getting quite frustrated with my serve. At this level, the margins are so small, and I felt like that was an area that I really needed to improve.

So, yeah, I think a lot of it is mental for me. I have had some elbow problems, and, you know, just like almost just letting go and letting my arm go, just using my legs, really just going for it and believing in it is a really big one.

Yeah, hopefully I can continue what I have started today throughout the year (smiling).

Q. Probably one of the more passionate celebrations that you have had at the end of that one, as well. Why so emotional after that one?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Oh, that's a good question. I think I was just, maybe I was a little bit more nervous today than I have been in previous years, especially because of how well I played here last year. You know, it's not anything that anyone has put on me. It's probably just pressure I have put on myself, and I know there is going to be lots of people that I know in the crowd, and I just want to make everyone proud and not necessarily win but put on a good performance.

So, yeah, and I think doubles was a little bit shaky yesterday, so yeah, I think I was just feeling a little bit more of those emotions. Sometimes I like to lean into it

and try to use it to my advantage, and I probably just let it out at the end (smiling).

Q. At 3-Love down in the two separate occasions, did the mind go back to the Chennai semi?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: No, it didn't go back to that exact moment, but obviously I didn't feel too stressed when I was down today. I just tried to take it one point at a time. I think I did a pretty good job of managing my negativity today when I was down. I knew it was just one break and I had had chances.

Yeah, I really backed my returns, so going down a break I didn't feel too stressed.

Q. I think going into the Aussie Open last year, you became our top-ranked woman going into the quallies. Now Maya's up there, and Emerson is coming through, and Daria is now onboard with the Aussies. Does it feel with the collective, the way you guys are going at the moment, this could be Australia's best chance since Ash retired to really give that second week of a Grand Slam a good run?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, absolutely. I feel really excited to part of the Aussie female contingent. I think there is some really great young, talented players coming through with Maya, Emerson, Tahlia, Taylah. The list goes on. I think it's really cool that we have that depth at the moment.

Yeah, I mean, last year I was very proud to be the first-ranked Aussie, but I knew that there was a reason, you know, there was reasons why some of the girls weren't inside the top 100 due to injury and things like that.

Yeah, it's an individual sport, but we all, I kind of like to see us as a bit of a team, especially with how much we have to travel throughout the year. We do lean on each other. Yeah, I think it's really cool. Yeah, I'm excited to see what everyone can do.

Q. Knowing you don't have to go through the quallies now, just the tournament, has that freed you up a little bit heading into the Open knowing it's our tournament and fresh prep?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, definitely I think it's going to be great to get more matches next week in Adelaide. Yeah, it's just been such a good feeling not having to worry about receiving a phone call whether I was going to get a wildcard or not, and just super proud that I was able to finish the year strong and keep myself in the top 100. It's a huge goal of mine to have qualified just direct entry into AO. Very cool that I've been able to tick that box.

Q. I guess last year seemed like it was a lot about almost resurgence for you after all the injury years. Now that's all behind you, what's 2026 about for you?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah. Well, obviously I have some big goals, but, you know, going to really try not to focus on my ranking too much. I think I fell into that trap a little bit last year. When I got to around 60, I kind of thought, oh, maybe I can get to 50 and beyond and put a little bit too much pressure on myself.

So I think I'm going to try to stay really clear on what I have been working on and, yeah, sort of keep my goals more based on, like, tournaments and trying to reach the second week of Grand Slams and trying to win a 250 if I can, because I have been in the final twice. You know, not checking my ranking every day, yeah.

Q. A bit of a stacked field here in Brisbane, and you play Anisimova next.

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah.

Q. Is it nice to get that opportunity? Do you look at it as a real opportunity and you look at the positives of it?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, absolutely. Stepping out on the court, you never want to beat yourself, and I'm going to give myself the best chance against her. We didn't play too long ago, so I think she obviously knows my game and I know her game. She's an incredible player, and I think I have nothing to lose.

And here last year I played some of my best tennis against someone who was ranked in the top 10. I'm going to try to use the crowd to my advantage and just really enjoy it.

Q. The really gritty way that you played today to fight back, having that match and that win under your belt, does that give you real confidence going in?

KIMBERLY BIRRELL: Yeah, I think it does really help that I play here all the time, I know the courts and the conditions very well, and also getting a match and feeling match fit. I know that she had a bye first round, so she won't have played.

Practice is very different to matches. So, yeah, also anything can happen at the start of the year, so I'm just going to keep doing me and see what happens.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports