

Australian Open

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Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Katie Boulter

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the Australian Open. Perhaps to begin with, you could give us an overview of your pre-season.

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, I'm very happy with my preparation so far. I think I've put the work in and already it's starting to show. The past couple of weeks I think I've been very pleased, but I'm very hungry this year going into it. I want a lot more. I expect a lot more of myself.

I'm very excited. I cannot wait to put more work in and see what I can do.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How different does it feel coming in not having to worry about quallies, having the full week to prepare? How different is that experience?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, it's definitely a different feeling. It's like a breath of fresh air a little bit. I know how hard quallies can be. It's just as hard as the main tournament.

For me to come in and know I spent a lot of time on the courts and I've prepared in a slightly different way, it does give me a bit more confidence. I know my body is going to be great going into the tournament rather than having played three matches. You never know what can happen.

For me, it's a really big help. Going out there, I'm going to be feeling good.

Q. Your first opponent...

KATIE BOULTER: She's currently in Hobart semifinals. I watched a little bit last night. I knew I was playing here. She's clearly a very, very good player. Got a lot of wins at the end of last year, a lot of tournament wins as well. She's definitely someone who is on the up.

It's going to be a tough match. I don't doubt that for a minute. I've got to be very prepared. I'll do my prematch talks with my coach and go through everything.

Q. How big was the win over Pegula for you?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, it was huge. I think I just tried

to trust myself in those moments. I think I learnt a lot from the Sabalenka match last year. I had a lot of chances serving for it twice. I felt like I just couldn't quite get over the line.

Actually during the match, I was thinking about it where I was trying to compose myself and remind myself I've been in this position before, just to keep going for it, keep trusting the work I've done during pre-season. I really feel like I could match her. I'm sure it wasn't the best match of her career, but I felt like I was right there.

She's one of the top players in the world. It gives you belief that that can be you. I strongly believe if I keep working the way that I do, I can be there.

Q. You're obviously used to the spotlight, particularly around Wimbledon time. What has it been like here given the interest in you and Alex, which I won't ask you about again? Is it kind of a bit weird, everyone taking so much interest?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, I mean, I am a very private person. I've always kind of said that from stage one. I like to keep myself to myself. My team are the people that matter the most to me, keep them away from everything.

I think it's definitely been fun to be a part of because it's been a little bit of a circus, but a good circus. I think it's awesome that he's getting the attention that he really does deserve. He's put the work in for it. He's playing some of the best tennis of his life.

It really does fill me with a lot of pride to actually watch him at this moment because I know everything that he's been through, how hard and how strong he is with everything he does.

It's been a pleasure to watch and be a part of it at the same time. I'll continue to support him with everything that he does, no matter the good and the bad.

Q. Is it more than at Wimbledon? Snappers around the corner, photographers everywhere.

KATIE BOULTER: It's really hard to describe. I mean, I can't walk down the street with him separately. I feel like I'm sharing him with everyone, which isn't a bad thing



(laughter).

Yeah, definitely it's a lot. But he's handled it a lot of his career and he knows how to deal with it. I'm right there next to him.

Q. Just watching you hit with Emma. Did you work a bit with her in off-season at NTC?

KATIE BOULTER: No, I actually didn't. We were scheduled for a practice, but it fell through during pre-season. I spent a lot of time in Alicante, which for me is my getaway, getting outside and getting ready for Australia.

Hitting with her today, I watched her matches last week, I think it's absolutely incredible what she's doing. I mean, to come back with that level already, it's inspirational.

For me, you know how long it took me to get back. It really isn't easy. Trust me. It's not something that you can just pick up like that. It seems like she's playing very, very well. I'm sure it's going to be a great year for her. I'm expecting big things.

Q. You and Alex, how much does the positivity he's showing rub off on you? You're in that environment.

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah. I mean, I feel like we've set up a very positive environment. I think it's showing right now. Of course, there's going to be a little bit of an ebb and flow where sometimes we're doing great, sometimes we're not.

I think he's really rubbed off on me in so many different ways: the way he holds himself, the way he works. Having his expertise on the side, it's great for me because it's a support. It's someone that I can talk to about anything, including everything to do with my career.

To have that extra support, it does make a huge difference. I feel like it's showing. It's been quite a few years that we've been together. I feel like we've built up a really fun, positive environment. It looks like it's working at the moment, so hopefully we can continue that.

I hope I'm rubbing off on him, too (laughter). I hope I am. But he's a great guy and I'm very lucky to have that.

Q. Is he enjoying the status of being the home favorite, him being a contender this year?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, he is. Ultimately you're only as good as your last win. I know he prides himself on his wins and his losses strongly.

I don't want to speak for him 'cause I know he can talk for

himself, but he's playing some great tennis going into this year. I'm sure he expects himself to come out and fight and do everything he's done for his whole entire career. We'll see what happens. The results will take care of themselves.

Either way, he's had an incredible start to the year already. I'm sure the rest of the year's going to be even better.

Q. Obviously you made such a big jump last season. A lot of people would probably be happy with consolidating that season this season. It seems like that's not you. You feel like you can really push on even further?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, I really do. Like, I made some amendments to my team last year. I felt like I really wanted to push on this year. I wanted to really get into the top, top level of tennis. I believe I can do it.

I played a lot of great matches last year. I think I played a lot of people with probably not the highest rankings, and I felt like I wanted to prove myself on every surface against every single player, really stamp my authority that I am a top-hundred player. It's never been a goal for me. Top hundred has not been my number. I think I did that five years ago. That was something I ticked off the box. Now I really want to keep pushing.

Even 50, I've ticked that off, as well. Now it's time to start getting up to the real business side of tennis. I think the work that we've been putting in has given me a great platform this past year to really push on and give these girls a go.

Now it takes a little bit of belief and a lot more hard work.

Q. What are the changes to the work?

KATIE BOULTER: I just added a fitness trainer to my team. He works with Andy. I think he's been a great addition to my team. Yeah, I think it's made a big impact on my tennis. Hopefully it will continue to show.

Q. When was that?

KATIE BOULTER: That was pre-season, yeah.

Q. Slightly boring question about tennis balls. How do you find the Australian Open ball? People say it fluffs up quickly. Are you happy enough with it?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, I mean, the balls, again, I just try and play with what I'm given. It does change week by week. I think the conditions have a massive impact.

During Perth, I played one night match and one day match, and they were completely different again. But

when I went to Adelaide there was a lot of humidity. That was the most I've seen them fluff up. They were pretty big. It doesn't help when the first game of the match is 20 minutes (laughter).

Yeah, it definitely fluffs up a little bit more and there's a change between the first couple of games and the seventh game, sixth game.

You just have to keep that in your mind. I think I'll be thinking about racquet tensions and things like that a little bit more these weeks. It will be interesting to see because a lot depends on what time of day you play.

Practicing at 9:00 in the morning, it's quite lively because the sun was out. Yesterday I hit at 8, and it was dead. You have to be flexible. It's part of tennis. I'm ready to go either way.

Q. 8?

KATIE BOULTER: In the morning. Yesterday was quite overcast and it was cold. It felt a little bit flat, where today it was pinged a little bit more off the racquet. Granted I'm hitting with Emma, the ball is coming off quickly. It's a huge difference.

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