

# Australian Open

Monday, 15 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Ben Shelton

Press Conference



B. SHELTON/R. Bautista Agut

6-2, 7-6, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: First of all, congratulations, Ben. Welcome back to Melbourne. How do you feel after getting your first-round win today?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, it was great to be back playing in Melbourne. Really enjoy playing here, the crowds, the atmosphere. It was definitely a pretty hot day today in Melbourne. I was feeling the heat out there a little bit, but yeah, really enjoyed it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions from the floor, please.

**Q. How did you feel like you handled those exchanges today?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, it's always tough when you are serving for the set and you don't get it. I served for it at 6-5 and got broken at love, which it was tough.

Five-set matches usually aren't straightforward throughout five-set matches. I was happy with the way that I bounced back and won the tiebreaker pretty decisively.

Yeah, overall I thought I held my nerve pretty well at the end of the sets. I mean, obviously other than getting broken at love serving for it.

**Q. Roberto seemed to do a good job of trying to keep you pegged down on that backhand as much as he could and really not giving you what you wanted. How much do you learn from playing guys experienced as that?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, he's a smart player. Definitely a vet. Not only in the way he plays, but what he does in between points, the way he manages himself. He doesn't give you much or show much out there. That was pretty interesting to see.

But, yeah, I think he did a great job trying to not give me what I wanted with the forehand, and I was trying to do the same to him. So, yeah, it was a good battle.

**Q. What about Chris O'Connell next? What do you know about him, and what are you expecting?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, Chris is a great guy, first off. I'm really looking forward to the matchup. Anytime that you play an Aussie here in Melbourne, you know you're in for a rowdy matchup.

I know a lot of the crowd is not going to be on my side for this next match, but I'm used to that. I played an Aussie last year here in Melbourne. So, yeah, I'm really looking forward to it.

**Q. Do you like those sorts of environments, a lot of energy and bounce out there, a bit of adversity sometimes? Is that something that you thrive with?**

BEN SHELTON: I don't mind it. I think it makes tennis a lot of fun. It's an environment that I got used to playing in playing college tennis. I know I'm not just the college guy anymore who just got out here. I've been on tour for a year, but I still enjoy those types of a little more hostile atmospheres.

**Q. Can I ask you about this thing we found with Djokovic. Did you see the L'Equipe interview that he did or see reports of it?**

BEN SHELTON: No.

**Q. He was asked about the business of the fine from the US Open. He was asked what it was all about. I'll just read you what he said. He said, 'This is my reaction to a provocation that came from the opposite side' - to your side - 'concerning Ben Shelton. It was a reaction against him on the fact that he did not behave correctly with respect on the court and also before the match.' That's the story. What's he talking about? What went on before the match? Was it a locker room thing? Did you have words?**

BEN SHELTON: No, I don't really have anything else to say on the whole US Open situation. I feel like I've been asked about it constantly in the last four or five months. I feel like I've said my peace on the matter. I would rather just let it settle and move forward.

We're in Australia now, and we're at the Australian Open



and not the US Open anymore. I'm just focusing on the Australian Open and happy and grateful to be here.

**Q. Just more on that. Watching you play, we can all see the exuberance, see the energy. There's no sign of malice. I don't see any ill will that you're projecting. What's your sense of that? Are you ever trying to deliberately get under your opponent's skin, or is it really much about you just having fun out there and enjoying yourself?**

BEN SHELTON: I don't know. I feel like I enjoy myself out on the tennis court. Everyone can have their opinion on who I am or how I act. But, yeah, I don't know. I don't have an answer to your question.

**Q. Just how would you compare your game 12 months on from what it was like in Melbourne last year? It feels like you're a much more complete player than you were. What have been the biggest improvements do you feel like you've made?**

BEN SHELTON: Thanks, I appreciate that. I feel like I've made some strides in certain areas. I think a much more solid baseliner. At this point of the year I feel like I've rounded out my game a little bit, and I'm not relying on my serve as much as I was last year.

I feel myself being a little bit more comfortable in rallies that go past three or four shots. I feel maybe last year I heavily relied on plus-ones and winning the point in the first two or three shots. So I think that my shot tolerance has improved a bit. That just comes with playing so many great players in different places, different surfaces.

It makes you improve.

**Q. Kind of a similar question, but obviously this time 12 months ago was your first trip out the country, right? You've been through so much. I'm kind of not talking about results and stuff in the last 12 months. You've seen so much of the world in the last 12 months. Do you look at the world differently? How has that changed you?**

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, it's been cool for me to see different places, different cultures. It's interesting because I feel a lot more comfortable now being in certain places outside of the U.S., whereas I felt like early last year I was, like, okay, I was comfortable in the U.S. When I was outside, it was a little uncomfortable.

But now I feel like I'm pretty used to things. Australia feels comfortable, easy, kind of at home. I'm happy that I got to go to so many different places last year. That was kind of my goal, play a tough schedule, a schedule where I was playing a lot of tournaments and traveling a lot.

I wanted to get used to the travel and kind of get to a

place where I feel like I know what to expect at each tournament and know which ones that I really like and then start to narrow down my schedule a little bit where.

**Q. Did you have a favorite place, results aside?**

BEN SHELTON: One of my favorite places was Switzerland. I liked Zurich a lot, but I also liked Geneva where I played the tournament. That was one place where I didn't play tennis and one where I did.

I would say outside of that, Australian Open has been pretty special for me and a really cool place. One of my favorite places to play.

**Q. Any plans for your downtime in Melbourne?**

BEN SHELTON: Downtime? I'm playing singles and doubles (laughter). Probably not going to be that much downtime. Three-out-of-five sets takes a lot out of you, so spending a lot of downtime recovering I guess and trying to work and improve on little things on my days off.

I feel good on my match days. But yeah, it's a busy schedule playing singles and doubles.

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