

National Bank Open

Friday, August 8, 2025

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Ben Shelton

Press Conference



B. SHELTON/K. Khachanov

6-7, 6-4, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Ben Shelton, the winner of the 2025 National Bank Open presented by Rogers to the interview room. Ben, congratulations on your first Masters 1000 title, and you will be in No. 6 on the PIF ATP Live rankings, which is also your career high. How do you feel about your two weeks here?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, really happy. I'm really grateful for the opportunity. I feel like it was a perfect storm for me this week. A lot of tight matches, long matches, played some of the best tennis that I've played this year. And to finish out the week the way that I did, especially with the opponent that I had today, and the way that he was playing, I couldn't be happier.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Can you tell me about your approach in the tiebreaker?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I felt in that last game my slice serves were moving like 10 feet left to right. I don't know what it was, slight change in my ball toss or swing speed, and I was getting a crazy amount of bend on the serve. So I kind of just stuck with that. Stuck with the slider serves, whether it was into the body or to the forehand or to the backhand, I was just trying to make that ball move left to right.

I'd been hitting a lot of fastballs throughout the match, a lot of straight balls, and I thought he was returning that serve pretty well. That kind of was my approach to going through my service points.

On returns, I was just trying to be really aggressive with my footwork, find forehands, try to get to neutral, and get to attack. And, yeah, I hit one screamer return at the end of the tiebreak, but just tried to flip the switch. I lost the first tiebreak, not being tentative, but he overpowered me. He

played bigger than I did, he hit better shots than I did, and I just didn't want to go out the same way.

Q. Two years ago, Jannik won his first big title here in Toronto, and since then it's been onward and upward for him. Do you think this could be your breakthrough moment?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, yeah, you never know. I think everyone has a different path. Everyone's story is written differently. I've kind of done it my way. There's been a lot of guys to look up to, just because how young they have been when they have broken through, and have had so much success at big tournaments. Tennis seems to be a sport that has young champions all the time, which is not common or normal, it's ultra impressive.

Yeah, I hope that this week kind of kick starts me and gets me more consistent with the type of tennis that I want to play day-in and day-out. It's certainly going to push me to work harder. I feel like I have a good grasp now on the things that really work for me against guys who are playing some of the best tennis in the world, and the things that I need to continue to work on.

Q. You took some time to thank your dad in your speech. Kind of describe what makes your coaching dynamic work.

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, he knows me really well. He doesn't sugarcoat things, he's honest. I think I take things well from him because I respect the career he had as a player, I respect him as a coach, obviously, and I respect him as my dad. He respects me in the same way.

I know that he has a great tennis mind, he respects my tennis mind, and my independence, knowing that, you know, he can let me go in the big moments and just let me play my game. But he does a great job of injecting little bits and pieces throughout the match that help me.

So I think, you know, the respect is one thing that helps a lot, and then just the kind of coaching, coach/player model that we have I think works really well.

Q. You mentioned this week about resilience being the thing you're most proud of in your game. Where today



did you think you were the most resilient in the match?

BEN SHELTON: I mean, there was a lot of points, or a lot of times in the match where I felt I was resilient. Being up against it in the second set, the way that he was holding serve kind of going through his service games. He served first, so there's scoreboard pressure.

Then being down Love-40, trying to serve out the set, winning, I forget, five points in a row or whatever it was to hold that game was massive for me.

Then just same thing in the third set. Scoreboard pressure, he's getting through his games really easy, serving amazing, hitting great from the baseline. I just continued to match him, and keep holding, and then played an unbelievable tiebreaker. So I think that that was just kind of the name of the game for me today.

Q. This whole week you had pretty big crowds out there cheering you on. How did you play off the crowd, and how do you think that you also helped to contribute to fire them up throughout the week?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I love getting the crowd involved. Hitting highlight shots, hyping them up. I love hearing the crowd noise. For me this was a week that I was pretty locked in, probably less crowd interactions, but the tennis that I was playing still got people excited.

For me, it's a big balance of being myself out there, having fun, smiling, which is just my DNA, and focusing and doing what I need to do to get the job done.

Q. Earlier you were talking about that this win is going to push you to work even harder. What is the next step for you in terms of your game and your mentality to take next step and win a Grand Slam? You have been close, making semifinals, but, yeah, what is next step for you?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, for me, being as consistent as I was this week. I think that the more opportunities that you have, the more times you put yourself in the position to be playing against the best players in the world, you're only going to get better.

So, for me it's being in the later stages of the tournament and playing against guys who are playing their best tennis to see where I match up, and see where my weaknesses are and where I can get better.

I think that watching film is a huge piece for me, something that I didn't do as much in the past, and as of late it's been kind of an every-match thing for me, at least watching one

match or one set start to finish on the guy I'm playing. I think it's an important piece of the game that maybe I overlooked a little bit in the past, or didn't think was as important, because I was like, I'm going to impose my game on whoever I was playing, but it's a really important part of the game. I think that my tennis IQ and my tennis mind is something that is getting better, and something that needs to continue to get better.

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