

WTA Tennis Media Conference

Wednesday, March 23, 2022

Ashleigh Barty

Craig Tyzzer

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everyone, for joining. We have Ash Barty and her coach Craig Tyzzer with us. Thank you for making yourselves available to the international media. We have about 20 minutes with Ash and Craig today.

Who would like to get the first question, please?

Q. Ash, a couple of things. How are you feeling now 24 hours after? Are you intending to advise the WTA to take your name off the rankings or do you plan to have it left there?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it's obviously been a crazy few days. It's been really overwhelming the amount of support and love that we have received as a team. I think it's been obviously a changing time, but I'm really excited for what's to come next and the new opportunities for me as a person.

Yeah, as for the rankings, I'll be coming off the rankings in the next cycle, which will be after Miami. It's a new start for the tour, which is going to be really exciting for them. They've got exceptional players, great depth. It's going to be really exciting for them.

Q. Ash, at the end of the video with Casey, you kind of said this was scary, which is very understandable. If you can articulate a little bit, what are you feeling in terms of what is the scariest part of this?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Probably the scariest part was trying to get it out in my words, kind of on our terms. Obviously timing is everything. It's never easy. But I felt like the timing was right for me. It was just about getting the messaging right. Sitting down with Case was really hard. It was brilliant, it was a perfect way for us to do it, but it was hard to chat to your best mate and talk about how much your life is going to change.

It was really nice to sit down and reminisce and talk about

the things that mattered most to me. Yeah, it's scary but it's exciting. It's a double-edged sword. Even though it is something new, it's something I'm very excited for, new challenges. I can't wait to be able to do that as the person and not necessarily just the athlete.

Q. Ash, as you do look forward into not the abyss, but can you share with us what are you chasing and what are these things that have pulled you away from us?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it's exciting because there are so many things that Ash Barty as the person wants to achieve and dreams that I want to chase after.

I think my purpose won't change. I just get to contribute in a different way. I get to contribute more on the tennis side with the younger girls, younger boys, throughout the communities, which is really exciting for me, to be able to have more time to do the stuff that I do love, see the smiles on the kids' faces, bringing them the opportunity to play tennis. It reminds me of how it felt for me learning how to play this sport. That's going to be a beautiful way for me to be able to contribute. I'm really excited about that.

Obviously I get to spend a little bit more time with my family, as well, my sisters, my nieces and nephew. It's going to be a really exciting period and I can't wait.

Q. Ash, Casey said something in the video that you've always done things your own way, made the choices that were right for you. That's been a huge part of your success. There's a lot of machinery of tennis that can be hard to buck the trend, to get off the treadmill that never stops in tennis. Where do you get the strength, the courage to be able to do that, to say I can do this and put yourself first in those ways? Is it always simple to go against the current?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I mean, I've never been someone who's wanted to go with the current. I think, if anything, my decisions have most of the time been against the grain from the norm. In a sense, they've been right for us, for our team. That's all that matters to me, is that the people around me, the people that love me and know me as a person know the decisions are made for the right reason. This one is no different.



It may have come as a shock to lot of people. But to the people that know me the most, the people closest to me and have spent the most time with me, they know exactly how I was feeling, what we went through together.

I think that was an important part of that, knowing that I've been so fortunate to have their love and support throughout, particularly the second phase of my career. Our team essentially has not changed, which is rare on the tour as well. I'm very proud of that, that we've done this together. We've gone through the ups and downs and stuck fat together.

I think it's been an incredible ride. I've got absolutely no regrets and nothing but really fun memories to look back on.

Q. Do you feel like there was anything keeping you in this sport that you had to break free from?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: No, no. I mean, I've never had anything to prove to anyone. I've always done things that felt right for me. Timing is everything. I'm a big believer in that. For me the timing was right now for us to step aside and to go on to bigger and better challenges for me as a person.

Q. Is there anything that you feel sorry that you won't have a second shot at? I remember seeing you at the Olympics very disappointed for how it went. It obviously meant a great deal for you. What are you going to miss the most about your tennis career, apart from talking to us?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Of course, talking to you. I'll miss that every single day. You've been the best part of my day (smiling).

No, I think there are a lot of things that I will miss, for sure. I think a lot of that is the relationships that we've built along the way with my team and with some of my best friends on tour. I'll definitely miss seeing them.

I know our paths will cross again, whether it's down here in Australia or on their side of the world. But I know we'll have that opportunity just in a different way, which is really exciting.

I think as for a second chance, I've been fortunate enough in my career to already have a second chance. I had a second phase of my career that brought me so much fulfillment, that brought me so much happiness. I'm really grateful to the people around me that helped me achieve that. They invested so much time and energy and made

so many sacrifices in their own lives to try to work towards this dream that we did have.

To be able to sit back now and know we left no stone unturned and we achieved everything we set out for is something I'm really proud of.

Q. Off court the announcement made a lot of noise yesterday. Did you anticipate to receive so much love and recognition from the tennis world?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I was very fortunate to get a lot of love and support. I wasn't quite sure how the news would be received. But very much overwhelmed by how positive it was and how many people reached out to me and sent me a note, which is really nice.

But it was really nice to hear from so many of my competitors as well, knowing that we built relationships over the years and years now. I'll certainly miss them.

Q. Was there a specific moment where you realized this was the right decision, a decision you had to make now? Did you talk it through with your team or your family and friends, or was it something you felt strongly about on your own?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I never felt like it was a decision that I had to make. It was a decision that I got to make and I had the opportunity to make it on my terms, which is great.

My team, we're so close-knit. We definitely are chatting to each other about it. Everyone was on the same page, which is really good. We've been through so much together. I think just knowing we're all on the same page now is really nice and exciting.

The team that we have professionally has become my family. I know that our relationship will never change whether we're hitting tennis balls or not. I think the thing is we've built that relationship over time and built that love and respect. That certainly won't change for us.

Q. If you look back on your career, if you pick one moment which is not necessary to be the happiest moment, a moment where your career which makes it turn around, a turning point of your career, what would it be?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I think on court I've had a lot of different turning points for different reasons. But I think having the opportunity to come back into the sport for a second time and almost making that decision to come back and try again was a really important one.

I left last time in a very different head space. Now I feel like I'm happy, I'm fulfilled, and I know I've left absolutely everything out there, and I'm really proud of that.

Q. Not just today but in general, in many of the press conferences with other women on tour, you come up a lot as someone who they're trying to chase down, emulate, admire. For you personally, how would you like to be remembered? What do you hope your legacy will be in the sport?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I just hope that everyone knows what they saw is who I am and what they got. I've never tried to be anyone that I'm not. Every time I was on the court, I gave it my all. I was fair. I competed well. No matter the result, the relationship never changed off the court.

I think that was something that my parents instilled in me when I was quite young, is having that respect and having the courage to be brave and just play. No matter what happens, that doesn't change anything off the court.

I think as much as I've had the opportunity to have success in tournaments, in rankings, that's never what was important to me. It was the experiences and the memories along the way.

Q. A lot of players today your age, they were all saying they hoped maybe you would decide to come back later, especially because you came back before. Is the door completely closed? Is this what you want right now, you're saying never say never or...

ASHLEIGH BARTY: You never say never. But it's a long way off at this stage (smiling).

Q. You said earlier the next cycle you'll drop off the rankings. Obviously a lot of back-of-the-envelope calculations at the moment. Iga Swiatek, you guys practice together, are relatively close, but can you talk about what your thoughts are on that if she were to be the one to pick up the torch you've put down?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I'm not sure of what the possibilities are. I've never been one to look at it much. I know that if it is Iga, there is no better person. She's an incredible person, a great tennis player. The way that she's brought this fresh, fearless energy onto the court has been incredible.

I loved testing myself against her. I loved playing her. I loved practicing with her and spending time with her team. She's a brilliant person, and was one of the first to message me, which is really nice.

I think she thoroughly deserves it. I hope that she can take it and still be her, do it her own way, and really chase what she's after in her career and her dreams.

Q. You spoke a little bit about juniors. Are you going to have a formal role with juniors? If so, can you give us any kind of details or timeline?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: No details to share as yet. That's just a goal and a dream of mine, to be able to give back to the sport that has given me so much. Obviously young girls and juniors is an area that I'm really interested in.

Yeah, down the track I'm hoping I'll be able to contribute in some way.

Q. Is there any chance of you becoming a professional golfer? Always been whispers around.

ASHLEIGH BARTY: You guys love to whisper, don't you? No, we'll wait and see. I got to try and learn how to hit the middle of the club face before I can think of trying to get on the tour.

Q. Do you think had COVID not hit your decision would be any different right now? What are you doing tomorrow?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I mean, you never know. It's really hard to think of the what ifs. I think I'm just so grateful for every opportunity that I've had. I feel like the decisions in some really uncertain times over the last two years have been really clear for me and for our team, which has been important.

But I have no regrets. I mean, I don't think about what could have been. I just appreciate what we did get to do and what we had, what we've created together. I think that's a really special part of it.

As for tomorrow, hopefully in the nicest possible way I don't have to talk to any of you guys and I can get on with being flat out on a Friday.

Q. Craig, if there's one off-court moment in all of your years with Ash, what is it?

CRAIG TYZZER: That's a tough one. Yeah, look, there's probably too many. I was actually the other day looking back at some of the old photos. It's funny because a lot of the photos out of the trophy presentation, are all the wins, it's all the off-court with our team.

So there's probably not one thing. There's probably just a

multitude of things that have gone on.

Yeah, look, there's probably too many to mention. Maybe getting hit in the wrong spot playing cricket before the French Open final was probably a memorable off-court moment.

Q. You took time away from the sport because of the pressures. We've seen a lot of young athletes talking more about mental health issues. Is there any advice you would give to the women who are on the tennis tour now or athletes in general in terms of handling the pressure, social media, et cetera?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: It's a different world I think. It keeps evolving. I think it's really hard for me to comment on anyone else's career. Obviously their experiences are different to mine.

I just know I was fortunate enough to have so much support and put the right people around me that were able to help me through some really tough moments and learn how to continue to be myself in some of the toughest moments.

I think, if anything, that's what you want to do, is stay true to yourself and continue to be yourself regardless of what situation you are in.

Q. People in your profession love to compete. It means a tremendous amount to them. Rafael Nadal appears to live for it. You've been remarkably successful. What is your attitude about the competition? Do you expect you might miss it? Is there some way you think you can replace that adrenaline that drives so many players?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: I love the competition. That's what has driven me the most in my career, is that one-on-one competition and the thrill of the fight. I know that I'll miss it 100%. But I'll be able to get the adrenaline in different ways. Those ways will remain to be seen. But I know that I've been so fortunate to have so many incredible moments on the court where that competitive nature has come out on top and has really flourished at times.

It's been an incredible career. I mean, you think about Rafa as someone that has been -- his longevity in the sport has been undeniable. He's been amazing for the sport of tennis. For me as a fan to see him do that over such an extended period has been a pleasure.

Q. About timing, did you know it could be your last match when you were on court at the Australian Open final? Would you have planned on playing this Billie

Jean King Cup tie against Slovakia, would you have stuck that out as a potential farewell event?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I was preparing to play our home tie here in Australia. Obviously the event didn't go ahead, which again throws a spanner into the works with my timing and my plans.

Being fluid and being flexible has been a massive part of our career, accepting those are the things we can't control. But, yeah, I mean, happy to have the Australian Open as my last match. Turned out to be an incredible moment, certainly memories that I'll never forget.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports