

US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

Ben Shelton

Press Conference

B. SHELTON/D. Thiem

7-6, 1-0 (ret.)

THE MODERATOR: Ben, onward to the third round. Give us your thoughts on today and how you felt you were playing.

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I think I can take a lot of confidence based off how I was playing in the first set, how the first set went, because for the majority of it, pretty much the whole set, I didn't notice any difference or dips in play. I thought that I was playing my game and I was playing well.

I did a lot of things well today. I felt like I've built well off of my last match, the way I was playing two days ago. Yeah, so I think I'm happy with the way that I competed throughout the set.

It's always unfortunate when you have a match cut short. But the upside is that I'll be more rested than having a five-hour battle come two days from now.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You were able to take a high level and edge him out.

BEN SHELTON: I think after the match with Cachin, I kind of showed that I was comfortable coming from behind, dealing with some adversity, tough things in the matches I play. Being down 5-0 and losing the first set 6-1 in my first round. Obviously going down a break early in the set, or going down 4-2, then getting it right back, I thought that I did a great job again staying composed, competing, turning the switch on when I needed to, playing points smart, the right way, being aggressive at the right times.

I felt like things were flowing today, especially towards the end of the set in the tiebreaker. I kind of found my groove.

Q. Against a top player, without having your perfect serve, it shows how your return is making progress.



BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I definitely think one of my better returning days, kind of finding the balance of how to be aggressive on the return of serve, how to get ahead in some points, but be consistent, not be spraying returns everywhere. I'd say this is one of the better return days that I've had.

One of the big things that gives me a lot of confidence, playing a good server like Dominic, and to be able to get a break and take him deep in a lot of his service games. I didn't break every time, or the majority of the time, but he didn't have too many free games where he got through his service game easy.

Q. This has been your first full year on the tour. What have you learnt about life on tour and life as a tennis player that you didn't know before?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I think it's a little bit more lonely than being in college. You travel with a big team, all your friends. Always staying in a hotel room with somebody else. There's not much downtime or alone time.

Being out on tour, you have a lot more time to yourself alone in your hotel room, more time to think about things. That can be a positive or a negative (smiling). But I'd say that's one of the biggest differences for me.

The other difference is that there's not many breaks in the schedule. It seems like the tour is always going till December. It's just go, go, go, go.

I would say I assumed, before I was out here on tour, that there were more down weeks or weeks when there weren't tournaments, but it seems there's always something going on.

Q. I think you hit seven aces in an hour-long match. One of your serves was 140 miles per hour. Do you look at the serve speed after you serve, and if you had a serving strategy?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, my dad gets mad at me when I chase the numbers on the score clock, the mph's, because once I hit one at 140, I'm going to try to beat it on the next one, 145. That's something we go back and forth about.



But, yeah, I think that my serving strategy changes each match. But the overall consistency of what I do on my serve stays the same. I try to mix things up and keep guys off balance. I thought I did a great job today of changing up speeds and spins. I didn't feel at any point he had a bead on my serve.

I'd say that my biggest problem in my service games is that I break myself sometimes. It's not only people hitting return winners against me or getting into net, hitting volley winners. It's a lot of errors coming off my racquet.

I felt like lately I've been doing a better job of kind of managing my service games, knowing when to pull the trigger and when to pull back a little bit.

Q. The way you exude emotion on the court, you don't hide emotion. You seem to be joyful out there, like loving the moment. What's the importance to you of joy on court?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I think it's really important for getting me in the right mental state. Playing the type of tennis where I love to be out there. I feel like when I try to put myself in this, Okay, let's be professional, be quiet, have a stern look on my face the whole time I'm playing, it takes away from some of my creativity on the court, some of the energy or explosive movements that I like to do when I'm playing.

I think for me, having a smile on my face helps keep things fun. When I'm having fun, I'm playing some of my best tennis.

I'd say that that's another thing for me: finding the balance of having fun, showing emotion, being loud, which I like to be on the court, and finding that balance.

Obviously the pro game is very different than the college game. The college game is much more obnoxious, people are screaming at all times. It's not as much of a gentleman's sport as it is out on tour. I've been kind of trying to find that balance.

Q. I watched your UTS video with 'Foe and Chris Eubanks. There was some great stuff in there. Something that you said you would like to have the aura of a Rafael Nadal, how everybody in the locker room is scared of him because they know he's outworking them. Can you elaborate and see how you are progressing in that direction.

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, did I say Rafa? I thought I said Roger.

Q. You had Roger in the beginning of the statement.

BEN SHELTON: I made the comment about Rafa because he's outworking people?

Q. Yeah.

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I think that something that gives me a lot of confidence when I go into a tournament or a new season is starting after an off-season, it's like, Okay, did everyone else out here put as much work as me in the gym? Maybe they did, maybe they put more.

I think putting as much work as I can myself, working smart obviously, not overworking, doing things that are stupid in my off-season, but working hard, working smart, pushing myself to the max, I think that's something that helps me give a mental edge. Even if the other guy has done as much work or more work, me knowing I've done as much as I can do, that's something that I try to work on and I'm trying to improve on.

Q. I believe today is the first time you've won two matches back to back since the Australian Open on the tour. You talked about joy. How did you keep that joy as you were going through the rough patches of the clay court season, expectations after the Australian?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I think knowing that it was my first time playing every tournament I was playing, and my first time on two surfaces that have been the majority of the season, I don't take that lightly. I know that it's something where there's going to be a little bit of a learning curve. I'm going to have to make some improvements and adjustments.

I didn't expect to be at the very top level on those surfaces right away. I feel like a lot of players get their first experiences on other surfaces at the future level or the challenger level. It's like, no, I'm jumping in right away to Masters 1000s, a 500 at the Queen's Club that's as strong as a Masters 1000. I'm playing a guy who's almost top 10 in the world in the second round.

I think that was a piece for me that I kind of had to keep my perspective and know that, Okay, it's not like I'm supposed to go out here and win every single match I play just because I did something good early in the season. I knew that it was going to be a challenge learning on these surfaces in a short amount of time with not much practice.

But, yeah, I think that having the right people around you, keeping my head screwed on straight, knowing that this is a marathon not a sprint, and I have a lot of long-term goals.

I'm not as worried about the short-term.

Q. Did you have any inkling during the tiebreak that Thiem was hurting in any way?

BEN SHELTON: No, not that I noticed. But I was pretty locked in. Emotions were high at that point. I was just competing the best I could. I wasn't really looking for anything on the other side. Maybe I would have noticed.

Q. He started coming towards the net.

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I mean, I could kind of tell when he came back on court after the bathroom break that he was pretty down, dejected with his head down. But I've played plenty of guys on tour who will give you that walk, kind of acting like they're down, then running like a rabbit the next point.

When I came out to my service game, I was ready to go and wasn't thinking anything of it. Then those four points where he kind of let the ball go by, I kind of had an idea of what was going on.

Q. Iga Swiatek, who also wears On, was talking about how she hasn't been able to switch to the shoes because something is not quite right yet. You, who wear the shoes yourself, what kind of transition from your old shoes to the On shoes, if there's anything you noticed or that stands out?

BEN SHELTON: Yeah, I think that was something for me that I knew a lot of the things that I wanted with my shoe. It wasn't too complicated. I think since my career has been shorter and I haven't played as many matches, I've still been growing the last couple years, I didn't really have a shoe that I loved or was comfortable with.

Finding a shoe that worked for me, even being able to build a shoe that catered to my needs, it was pretty easy to find something that I liked.

But when you're winning multiple Grand Slams on different surfaces, competing at the highest level, your movement is your biggest weapon, for someone like Iga, I think it would probably be a little bit more difficult than me who hadn't played before on clay, hadn't played before on grass. The only thing I had to go off of was the On shoe. I think it was a lot easier for me to adjust.

I'm sure that she'll figure it out and be in the shoe soon.

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