

# US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

## Ben Shelton

### Press Conference



B. SHELTON/T. Paul

6-4, 6-3, 4-6, 6-4

**THE MODERATOR:** Ben, you actually had a singles match this afternoon, started around noon.

**BEN SHELTON:** I don't think I did (smiling).

**THE MODERATOR:** Congratulations on a big win. I'm not going to talk about the bombs. If you could, talk about your net game, something Tommy Paul referenced in his press conference, how on point your net game was this afternoon.

**BEN SHELTON:** Yeah, I think it's something that has definitely improved in my game. I think that the net game is tricky. It's something that has to be practiced a lot, but also implemented in the matches a lot. It's a lot tougher to volley in matches and make great volleys 'cause the margins are so small.

You're hitting it pretty low over the net. The ball is coming at you quickly. You really need those match reps. The more that you continue to come in, come into the net during matches, the more you improve.

So lately I've made an emphasis in my matches of finding my way to the net. I've definitely seen the improvement throughout the tournament. I think that doubles is also something that helps my net game. I've been playing a lot of doubles lately, few tournaments here in the States, going deeper in the doubles draw than the singles draw. I think that's another piece for me that is very developmental.

Obviously I want to win my doubles matches, but also gives me a chance to work on skills that maybe I wouldn't get to work on all the time.

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions, please.

**Q. Next you face Frances. How would you describe Frances as a player and what does he mean to you?**

**BEN SHELTON:** Yeah, Frances as a player is electric. He's kind of been like a brother to me since I've been out here on tour and a guy who has kind of told me that he believed in me from my first ATP tournament. Just a great guy off the court. But on the court a nightmare to deal with. He does so many things well. One of them being engaging the crowd.

He's just one of those guys where it's must-see TV. You want to watch him play all the time. He kind of has that Carlos Alcaraz effect, especially here in New York. This is his place where he really wants to show up.

To be able to play against him in the quarterfinals on Arthur Ashe is something that's pretty special.

**Q. What do you bust each other's chops about?**

**BEN SHELTON:** What? Everything (smiling). There's not a time that he walks by me in the locker room and doesn't say something about, Man, I'm looking way better than you in this sleeveless shirt. You got to work on those shoulders, buddy (smiling).

Maybe that's the last one, but we always have some good banter.

**Q. The first two sets he had 10 break-point opportunities. He converted one. Why do you think you were able to be so successful when you were in so much danger there?**

**BEN SHELTON:** When I'm playing my best tennis and things are flowing, I love those pressure moments. That's when I hit my best serves. That's when I come up with my plus-one plays or the volleys. It's like I fall in love with those moments and I'm not scared of them at all.

I think that's something I've kind of found this week. I'm getting to that same place where the break points come up and I'm not really worried. Like, I'm pretty confident that I'm going to hit my spot or hit the forehand I need to hit.

I think that when you have full belief in yourself going into a moment, even when you're down in a game, I think that's when my confidence really comes out.



**Q. What was your game plan differently from Australia against him today?**

**BEN SHELTON:** Yeah, I think everyone has a game plan until they get punched in the mouth. In Australia I definitely got punched in the mouth a few times. I definitely made the mistake of trying to rifle through him on every shot. He's one of the best defenders and counter-punchers and movers this tour has. Trying to beat him with pace all the time definitely isn't the answer.

I tried to use a little bit more of my arsenal to be effective today, to mix things up, not let him stay on balance.

**Q. What was your reaction to seeing the numbers 149 on the board out there today when you reached that speed a couple of times? Is there anything unusual you did to develop your serve? Maybe at what age did you realize you had a real weapon?**

**BEN SHELTON:** Yeah, I think, like I said the other day, I don't think pace is what makes my serve great. I can definitely get up there in the MPHs, but if I hit 147 every single serve, the guys out here are going to catch up to it and they're going to start returning it and they're going to do it well.

Being able to change paces is something that's really important for me. I saw the 149 on the screen. Yeah, that's cool, but I'm also not out there to chase the miles per hour. I'm trying to effectively hold serve.

I think it hurt me a little bit today hitting 149, then maybe 141, then 149 again. I got broken my next two games. I think that sometimes when I'm chasing a number or I try to hit harder than is within myself, it messes up my rhythm.

Although sometimes it happens without me even trying, and I think that's fine. It's cool to see sometimes, wow, I can hit the ball that hard. I think in the long run, hitting serves like that back to back probably isn't something that's great for my tennis overall.

**Q. Might be just a coincidence, but you came in here just as Taylor was wrapping up.**

**BEN SHELTON:** Yeah, I saw the match point.

**Q. What is your reaction to the idea of three of you guys out of the final eight here? It's been a while since there were that many American men to reach the quarterfinals. This is all a bit new to you. Have you heard anything or what have you heard from guys who have been around a little longer like Taylor or Frances about Andy Roddick in 2003, how they might be sick of**

**having heard about that?**

**BEN SHELTON:** It's a shame that two of us have to play in the quarterfinals. Maybe we could have three in the semis.

Yeah, I think it's a really cool opportunity for American tennis. This is what you guys always talk to us about: who's going to be the next Grand Slam champion? Who's going to do it?

I always have the same reply: American tennis is going in a great direction and I don't know who's going to be the next to get a slam, be the next Andy Roddick, but I know we're all on our own path and we're all doing things our own way and improving year to year. I can see it in these guys. Hopefully see the same kind of trend with myself.

I'm not really too worried about what happens from here on. It's pretty cool to know that at least one American is going to be in the semifinals here.

**Q. You're an excitable player, very emotional on the court. How do you balance that out with coming back to your composure? Is it a quiet moment you need in order to start the next point? Any tricks or tools you use?**

**BEN SHELTON:** Yeah, I think it's really important for me to find a reset level when I get back to the line, whether it's to serve or return. Maybe I'll take the first three to five seconds after a point to be emotional, and then I try to shut it down, try to shut my mouth, breathe through my nose, get my heart rate down and be ready for the next point.

It's kind of a cycle for me. It's not like I'm in this craze all the time. I'm getting better at being able to bring my levels back down after I have a big outburst or big emotion.

If it's negative, get that out of my mind and be right back for the next point.

**Q. Coming from Australia to now, I'm pretty sure you hadn't won two singles matches in a row. Is that correct?**

**BEN SHELTON:** Yeah. I did at the challenger. All you guys care about is the ATP Tour (smiling).

**Q. What is different? What's been different the last 10 days? Is it just the margins are so slim in this sport?**

**BEN SHELTON:** Yeah, I mean, the majority has been three-setters in the ATP tournaments. In matches that I've lost, I've been playing mostly on red clay and grass, which I

never played on before. So maybe that had a small piece to do with my losses or not winning back-to-back matches. I wasn't that comfortable.

I love the three-out-of-five-set format. Being able to play on a hard court in this format is something for me, I think that I can find a lot of success.

I hope that the same happens on grass and clay one day, the more that I improve on those surfaces, but I'm just not quite there yet and that's okay. I hope to get there one day.

**Q. I call social media 'The Land of the Trolls'. A lot of people that never played the game... For anybody that says that run in Australia was maybe a fluke or anything, do you pay attention to any of that stuff? What would you say to anybody that might have been doubting you coming into this tournament?**

**BEN SHELTON:** Yeah, I'd be lying if I say I don't see it. But I'm not a guy who gets frightened or scared by comments on social media. I'm someone that when people are saying too many nice things about me, that's when I get a little soft.

But when people are saying negative things about me, that just drives me. It's not something that I ever worry about.

If I go to sleep at night thinking about it, it's more anger than me being sad. That helps me get out of bed and go to work every single day, work hard to get to where I want to be.

I like seeing those comments sometimes or messages or doubters. I think that it's something that helps fuel me.

**Q. I asked Frances about the video, Tommy in his press conference saying he was overly respectful in the changeovers because you were serving so well, trying to throw you off. Is there anything Frances can do in the changeover to throw you off?**

**BEN SHELTON:** There's a million things Frances can do to try to throw me off. Who knows if he tries them or not. I wouldn't be surprised if he does (smiling).

I'm sure there could be a little chirp back and forth once or twice during the match. It's all friendly stuff. We're going to compete hard to make the semifinals of a slam, that's for sure. I'm 100% sure that we're still going to be friends (smiling).

**Q. I wanted to refer to your mixed doubles, the fact you're still in it, will play tomorrow night. Are there**

**pros and cons? Playing a late match tomorrow night? Do you see it as all positive being in the mixed?**

**BEN SHELTON:** I think I play fourth on. All doubles matches, no not-before times. Hopefully it won't be a night match. Hopefully it will just be an afternoon so I can sleep in tomorrow, use the mixed doubles as a practice. We played 58 minutes tonight. If I practice tomorrow, I'd practice for an hour, so...

I don't think that it's something where it's like, Oh, I'm going to be so tired after my mixed doubles.

I feel pretty good physically right now. I don't think there will be any issues.

**Q. Do you think it's a positive?**

**BEN SHELTON:** 100%, yeah. I think being able to be on the court and have a little bit more relaxed environment, having fun, but still playing for something. I know that Taylor would love to try to get a title here. That's our goal. We'll see what happens.

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