

Miami Open presented by Itaú

Thursday, April 1, 2021

Miami, Florida, USA

Ashleigh Barty

Press Conference



A. BARTY/E. Svitolina

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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. How does it feel to be back in your second straight Miami Open final?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it's really exciting. Obviously that's the goal for any tournament you play is you always want to give yourself a chance to try and hold the title at the end. It's an exciting opportunity now that we're in another final here in Miami.

Q. You probably have been asked this question before this week, but when you overcome a match point in your first match at a tournament, do you kind of feel you're playing with house money the rest of the way?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I think obviously whenever you come back from a match point down it's a little bit of a strange feeling. It doesn't happen very often.

So I think you have to be then almost more open with what the possibilities of the rest of the tournament could be. Yeah, you just keep going out there and keep fighting no matter what, knowing that you could have just as easily been out of the tournament at the previous hurdle.

So I think you just stick to your processes over and over and try and make the most of the opportunities.

Q. I want to ask you kind of a vague question. Maybe you can help me out. Your points are so wonderful. They have such variety. There is such decision-making. It's really special. Can you sort of take us inside sort of the art of the moment out there, the mix of anticipation and vision, shot selection? What's it like just to be in the moment there, if you could describe that.

ASHLEIGH BARTY: It's very kind of you. Thank you. I know when I'm playing my best, it's actually very quiet, is probably the word that I describe to use the most. I feel

very clear with what decisions I want to make, but it also comes quite naturally.

It turns into a little bit of see ball, hit ball. The first decision, the first choice that I make in my head, I usually stick with my gut and go with that choice.

At times I have to be able to adapt and adjust, but when I'm playing my very best, I think it's me in control and being quite clear with the choices that I am making.

Q. Probably feels like a long time ago at this point, but how does this run to the final for you compare to the one in 2019?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, chalk and cheese. Very different, I think. The conditions have been very different here this week. It's been a lot warmer. Physically it's been quite demanding. I remember last year we had a lot of rain, a lot of late nights, and a lot of disrupted matches.

So it's been a little bit of an adjustment this year, but without a doubt, the quality of tennis has been just as good and just as consistent, which is what obviously you're after in big events and events that extend over -- well, we had the two-week event here, that are a little bit longer, but it's all the challenge of trying to do the best you can every time.

Q. From watching you play, it seems no matter the circumstances, you always exude a sense of cool and calmness out on the court, showing the sense of confidence that everything is going to turn out okay in the end. My question is where does this sense of confidence come from? How do you learn it? How do you apply it especially the way that you have?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Oh, I think the confidence, without a doubt, comes from the practice, the practice and the training, knowing that I have worked extremely hard with my team to refine my game. But I think almost the calmness, I suppose, and as you said almost seeming like everything will be okay in the end, I know that everything will be okay in the end.

It's not going to ruin my day whether I win a tennis match



or not, and of course it's disappointing, I want to try and be the best that I can be, and the competitor in me loves to win, but in saying that, the sun will always come up the next day.

I mean, like you said, everything will turn out okay. It's not just dependent on tennis results.

Q. The other day you said that you're planning right now to be away from Australia through to the US Open because of all the circumstances with the COVID and stuff. Obviously the situation seems a little bit fluid. There are tournaments on the schedule but maybe they won't happen, like France just went into a lockdown for four weeks and stuff. Have you determined where you might set up a base in case something doesn't go, or...

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, I mean, the whole world at the moment is still going through kind of that tricky phase. I know for my family and friends in Brisbane it's been a bit of a rough week for them at home. I mean, my heart goes out to them. I know that they were doing it a little bit tough, but thankfully the snap lockdown that happened in Brisbane means that my family in particular and families all across Southeast Queensland get to spend Easter with their family, which is always really special.

But like you said, the fluidity I suppose of what our intentions and our plans have to be need to have that flexibility, without a doubt. Of course you can plan, and I'm a person who likes to plan and know what we're doing in the next coming weeks and coming months, but at this stage, that's not quite possible to do. So we plan as best we can.

And as for a base, it's tricky to set one up yet because, as you said, anything can change in any given country. For the moment, it's week to week and just trying to figure out where we will be kind of at the following tournament the following weeks.

Q. What are your thoughts on a potential final either against the Canadian, Bianca Andreescu, or Maria Sakkari?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, Maria obviously has had an exceptional week. She's one of the best movers out on the court. She's one of the girls who brings extreme physicality to the court. Having played her a few times, I know how difficult those matches are.

For Bianca, I haven't played her before, haven't hit with her. It's a fresh one for both of us. But she's proven time and time again that she loves the big matches, loves the

big tournaments, and has the game and the physicality to win them.

Both matches will be different in their own right but no easier no matter which one it is.

Q. Looking back on this afternoon's match against Elina, someone who you don't have a winning head-to-head career win/loss record against, how did you figure her out today? Is there anything you can point to that was the difference between another loss on your ledger and beating her and now putting yourself back in the final again?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, each match that we have played I felt like it's gotten closer and closer. Now the head-to-head is very slowly starting to improve.

Elina is an exceptional competitor. She will never give you a free point. She's proven that over an extended period. She's been a top-10 player for a very, very long time. It's sometimes a bit of a fine line when you play her.

You have to be aggressive and you have to be able to take some risks. Knowing how good of a mover she is and how many balls she makes you play, you're going to make errors. I think it's just about kind of getting that fine line and getting that mix right.

Q. I can't imagine it being easy to have taken an entire year off from your job, like for anybody, especially given the circumstances of your day-to-day under normal circumstances. What were some of the biggest concerns that you and your team had with re-entry? How pleased are you to see that you seem to have retained a good deal of that muscle memory?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it wasn't easy. I think at times my head and my heart were pulling in separate directions, but we know that for me personally and for my team, all the decisions we made in 2020 were for the right reasons, and that made me settle a bit easier with that, without a doubt.

But we put in the work. We did an extended preseason, started in October and did the work. Then it was just having confidence and having that belief that we had done the work and knowing that it may not come straightaway. It may not be the first week, the second week, the third week or 20th week, but eventually I would find it. Eventually, all the work that we had done would pay off.

So I think it's having that patience in a mix with having the confidence to know that we have done the work and that my level of tennis is good enough to match it up with the best.

Q. I know you don't watch a lot of tennis, at least you try not to. So I'm just kind of curious how actually aware are you of kind of the way that Bianca plays, what she's been able to do to get herself into this position and all that? Because obviously she hasn't played that much and you don't watch that much tennis. How aware of you of her as a competitor?

ASHLEIGH BARTY: Yeah, it's a tricky one. Sometimes I have matches on like in the background, but typically they are on mute and I'm doing something else (smiling). More so it's almost a screen filler.

But Bianca has shown in big tournaments that she's got the ability to beat the very best, and I know from the little that I have seen that she's got a way of moving around the court that's extremely physical. She's got great hands and she's got options off both sides. She's got a chisel off both sides and has the ability to flip the ball up or hit through the court.

I think that's what makes her game exceptionally challenging is that she has so many different assets and so many different things that she can go to to ultimately let her competitor in her figure it out.

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