

Western & Southern Open

Monday, August 16, 2021

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Good to see you back on tour. Since your withdraw from Roland Garros, some things kind of change, and there is a lot of people talking about mental health in professional sports, which I think is a big opportunity. I would like to ask you if you are proud of being brave at that moment and all the people that you are inspiring, and if you have talked with Simone Biles during the Olympics or after them?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I would say for me in that moment I wasn't really proud. I felt like it was something I needed to do for myself. More than anything, I felt like I holed up in my house for a couple of weeks, and I was a little bit embarrassed to go out because I didn't know if people were looking at me in a different way than they usually did before.

I think the biggest eye-opener was going to the Olympics and having other athletes come up to me and say that they were really glad that I did what I did. So after all that, yeah, I'm proud of what I did, and I think it was something that needed to be done, yeah.

Q. Have you spoke with Simone Biles during Olympics or after them?

NAOMI OSAKA: I sent her a message, but I also want to give her space because I know how overwhelming it can feel.

Q. Good to see you again. For you, Tokyo Olympics were such a big event obviously that you got to look forward to for years, a lot of anticipation of them for a long time. Now that they are finally in the rear-view mirror for everybody, wondering if you feel at all sort of less anxiety or anticipation about this big event looming on the horizon and you kind of now move on with the rest of your normal career and life?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, for me, the Tokyo Olympics I have kind of been waiting for them for eight years almost, because I didn't make it to the Rio one. I felt like everyone kept asking me about the Tokyo Olympics I

guess every year from that point.

So I feel very sad about how I did there, but also a little bit happy I didn't lose in the first round, as well, because I haven't played in a minute.

You know, even the circumstances that it was held in, I was really glad to be able to experience all that, and lighting the torch and stuff like that, it was fun for me. I definitely think it will be like a really big memory for me.

Q. A question about press conferences and specifically after losses. I wonder if you could talk to us a bit about how those can be difficult and maybe even give some advice to people on this side of the Zoom how we can help make it a better experience for athletes who are going through difficult losses and difficult moments as we ask them questions in pressers.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, for me, I feel like most of the time -- this is just me as a person -- I'm pretty open when it comes to press conferences. I feel like I have been that way my whole life. There are times where I would say there is people that I don't know that well that ask me really, really sensitive questions, and then especially after a loss kind of amplifies a bit. So I would say even repetitive questions, like questions we have been asked before, but maybe you guys weren't there at the previous press conference, just like maybe read transcripts (smiling).

I'm not a professional in press conferences or anything, but, yeah, just to like make it a bit more of a friendlier experience, I would say.

Q. Would you like to see where it would be maybe an opt-out in certain situations would be a little more available and understood then as well?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I would say like maybe if we could be given a sort of a sick day (smiling). Like, you know, I feel like we get fined if we don't do press conferences, but sometimes we feel like really sad, and I feel like maybe there should be a rule that we could, you know, maybe



take a sick day from that and maybe respond to you guys in e-mails and things like that.

I feel like it would be kind of fair, but then again, I'm only speaking from my side and I don't know how, you know, your guys' whole -- I guess maybe you want to capture us when we're like straight off the court, as well, so I'm not sure what's fair. Yeah.

Q. A follow-up on that last question. You're not crazy about dealing with us, especially in this format. Yet you have a lot of outside interests that are served by having a media platform. I guess my question is: How do you balance the two? And also, do you have anything you'd like to share with us about what you did say to Simone Biles?

NAOMI OSAKA: When you say I'm not crazy about dealing with you guys, what does that refer to?

Q. Well, you have said you don't especially like the press conference format. Yet that seems to be obviously the most widely used means of communicating to the media and through the media to the public.

NAOMI OSAKA: Hmm. That's interesting. I would say the occasion like when to do the press conference is what I feel is the most difficult, but... Hmm.

Sorry. I'm thinking. Um...

THE MODERATOR: I think we can move on to the next question, Naomi? Do you want to move on to the next question?

NAOMI OSAKA: No, actually I'm very interested in, like, that point of view. So if you could repeat that, that would be awesome.

Q. The question was that you're not especially fond of dealing with the media, especially in this format. You have suggested there are better ways to do it, that we'd like to try to explore that. My question, I guess, was you also have outside interests beyond tennis that are served by having the platform that the media presents to you. My question is: How do you think you might be able to best balance the two?

NAOMI OSAKA: Um, I mean, for me, I feel like this is something that I can't -- I can't really speak for everybody. I can only speak for myself. But ever since I was younger, I have had a lot of media interest on me, and I think it's because of my background as well as, you know, how I play. Because in the first place, I'm a tennis player. That's

why a lot of people are interested in me.

So I would say in that regard I'm quite different to a lot of people, and I can't really help that there are some things that I tweet or some things that I say that kind of create a lot of news articles or things like that, and I know it's because I have won a couple of Grand Slams and I have gotten to do a lot of press conferences that these things happen.

But I would also say, like, I'm not really sure how to balance the two. Like I'm figuring it out at the same time as you are, I would say.

Q. Hopefully it's okay if I ask a couple of tennis questions. The first one is just how the training has been and how your preparation has been for the summer hard court swing. The second one is just related to your tweet over the weekend related to what's going on in Haiti. Yeah, just what your reaction is to the news there. Sorry.

NAOMI OSAKA: No, you're super good. (Crying.)

THE MODERATOR: I think we're just going to take a quick break. We will be back in one moment.

(Break.)

THE MODERATOR: We're coming back now. We just have time for one more question before we switch to Japanese, and so we're just going to ask Courtney to repeat her questions again for Naomi, and then we will switch to Japanese. Courtney, please ask your question again.

Q. Thanks for coming back. Sorry. Yeah, if you could just talk through what your preparation has been like, you know, for the U.S. hard court swing with everything coming up, and then also just your thoughts on what's happening in Haiti and your decision with your prize money.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, sorry for walking out.

Q. All good.

NAOMI OSAKA: It's nice to see you. So, yeah, my preparation, I would say when I came back from Tokyo, I took like three days off, and then I immediately started practicing again. For me, I felt like I played well in Tokyo, but there was still some decisions that I didn't make that well, so I just wanted to get that feeling back because I honestly haven't played many matches this year.

So I guess I'll see how that takes me and how well I'll do this tournament and sort of lead it on from there into New York.

I would say for Haiti, I feel like I'm not really doing that much, like I could do more, and I'm trying to figure out what I can do and what exactly or where exactly to put my energy into. But I would say, like, the prize money thing, it's sort of like the first thing that I thought of that I could do that would raise the most awareness.

I guess that is the reason why I announced it. It's really scary, because like I see the news every day, and honestly the earthquake was kind of close to, you know, my parents', like, school there, so I'm honestly not really sure how that's doing and I haven't seen any pictures or video of it yet. So, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Switching to Japanese questions.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I would say right now I feel pretty good. I think that I'm really motivated. There is only like three tournaments left in the year, and they happen to be, you know, in New York, in Indian Wells, I really love those places, and here, too. I like the roller coaster place that's right across the street.

I'm just, you know, trying to have fun and trying to play well. I think I can build off of what happened in Tokyo a lot, yeah, just trying to learn a lot.

Yeah, I mean, of course I'd really love to win this tournament for the extra motivation I have in giving an organization my prize money for Haiti, of course. But I accidentally saw my draw so I know how hard it's going to be and I know how tough the players are that are here.

So I would say I'm trying to take it one match at a time, and I don't even know who my opponent is going to be, so, yeah, just trying to train really hard each day and see where that takes me.

I feel like definitely that's a moment that I'll ever be, or I'll be the proudest of myself. I think, you know, my ojisan (phonetic) was probably like yelling at his TV when it happened. I feel -- I don't know. It was definitely surreal. I had to do a rehearsal the year before, but it felt very top secret. I didn't know I was the first tennis player to carry the torch, but definitely that's something that I'll remember in my heart.

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