

Western & Southern Open

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Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



J. TEICHMANN/N. Osaka

3-6, 6-3, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: A tough match today. Just talk us through the match and your thoughts on Jil's performance today.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I thought she played really well. I thought in the first set I was doing everything I was supposed to do, and then in the second set I feel like, and also in the third set I felt like I was a bit too defensive maybe.

But I also thought that my performance in Tokyo was also lingering in my mind a bit, because I felt like I was overly aggressive there.

I felt like I learned a lot from this match today, and I felt that, if anything to take away from this, I tried my best throughout the entire match, so I can sleep at night.

Q. A tough match today. I'm just kind of curious what you're feeling on the court, with the Coco match and also your matches in Tokyo, are you feeling like it's just an issue of getting match rhythm back? Because you have said a few times that you haven't played that many matches in the second half of the season. Is that where the gap is, or do you feel like there is an execution issue?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I feel like an execution issue would be because of not playing matches. I thought that for me I felt a bit hesitant, and normally I don't feel that way. Of course I put myself in this position by, like, choosing not to play that many tournaments, so, yeah, just feeling more comfortable with it, feeling more confident in myself, as well, because I feel like there were times where I was doubting myself.

For me, I feel like it's important to remind myself what my strengths are, and I think I did that well in the first set. Then in the second set, I felt like maybe I played a bit more to her rhythm, and also in the third set, as well.

Q. Do you feel that you're able to cut yourself slack, given, you know, your schedule over the last few months as you kind of play these events? Or are you still feeling like the pressure and, you know, things like that once you're in match of wanting to play at a certain level?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, definitely I have really high expectations of myself, but, like, I don't know. I would say my team cuts myself slack. Like they always remind me that, you know, I haven't played a lot of matches, and that I honestly tried as hard as I could today.

So I know that the level that I am right now, there wasn't anything I could possibly do more to win this match. So I just have to keep practicing and like reflect on the match that I played today. Hopefully it will come in time the results that I want.

Q. We're talking about the first set, you were really strong and came out really well. Were you surprised at all in the way Jil was able to come out in the second set and then in the third set? Did it surprise you at all?

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, it didn't really surprise me as much. I remember watching her play against Coco in Australia. I was thinking, like, this girl is really talented. It really doesn't surprise me at all. And also, people play me at a really high level, so I'm always kind of ready for that.

I would say for me, even though she played really well, I know that there is a lot of things I need to fix within my game, so in a weird way I'm kind of glad that I lost, because there are so many things that I want to fix before New York.

Q. Separately, the Western & Southern Financial Group announced today they would match your prize money to Haiti's funds that you wanted to donate to. What are your reactions to that? How did that make you feel?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I was definitely really happy about that. I'm kind of sad now that I couldn't have gone farther, but I think the main thing was to, like, raise awareness, and

I feel like I did that pretty well. Overall, I'm just glad that we were able to contribute something.

Q. You mentioned it a little bit in the previous answer, but how you feel about your preparation for New York, what you feel like your level is sort of at and what you still want to work on before heading to your first match there. And also, I'm curious if you're stopping at Waffle House before you leave Mason.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I feel like my level is not that far off, but I think I can't put myself too much in the past, because I think if I'm constantly thinking about what my level is, where my level should be, it's thinking in the past tense.

For me, if I want to keep looking forward and if I want to keep being more positive with myself, I need to think about the things that I could improve on.

So I wouldn't necessarily say what I can do to increase my level, but I would say what I can do to have won the match or what I could have done to become a better player. I know there is definitely a lot of things, but, yeah, I'm happy with how I played today. I think I didn't give up on any ball. I think maybe my point awareness or point construction could be a lot better, but, yeah.

Q. Waffle House?

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, I'm just trying to find a restaurant that's open now, because it's pretty late. Yeah.

Q. One of the consequences of losing today is that you can't get any more match play this week. Do you think you'll give any consideration to maybe play one of the smaller tournaments next week to get more? Because it worked out pretty well for you last year.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, that definitely was on the table, but for me, I also feel quite accomplished with what I did this week. I know I have only played two matches, but I think I have learned a lot from both of them.

My main thing was last year, I played a lot of matches before the Open, and then I injured myself. So I don't really want to go through that again, even though it worked out last year.

Yeah, I would say that option is on the table, but it's not, like, a high-percentage chance that I'm going to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions in Japanese.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I definitely wouldn't go into a tournament thinking that I can't win it. I would say for me right now I'm not even thinking about winning it, though. I'm thinking about going into the tournament and taking it one match at a time, and that's how I play really well.

For me, I feel today I maybe wanted to win too much, and that brought out a lot of tension in me. Maybe that was the reason why I lost. But, yeah, going into New York just trying to take it one match at a time.

Honestly, I don't know. Like, I feel like, you know, being a mature person is knowing when you make mistakes and trying to improve them, but that also could not be the correct definition. I think we all sort of analyze that differently.

For me, I think I took a step in the right direction today, because I was able to process things with my team after I lost. I honestly haven't been able to do that for the last couple of matches, so I think in that way, I have gotten a little bit mature. I know I had a little outburst on the court today, which I'm not that proud of, but hopefully I can keep learning from it.

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