

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

## Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Heading into Roland Garros, you opted not to play there last year and you competed in just one match on clay since the French Open in 2019. What are your thoughts going into really Rome but more importantly Roland Garros without the match preparation on clay?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, I feel like that's the reason why I'm here for match prep. I think, you know, actually in a weird way I'm kind of glad I'm not winning. I know that sounds a bit off, but I feel like I'm learning a lot. It kind of gives me a lot of drive to practice harder and to learn from all my practices.

Yeah, I don't take it in a bad way that I haven't played a lot of matches.

**Q. Well, if most of your preparation and most of your play in California is on hard courts, how difficult is it for you to make that transition? What is the difference for you in playing on these two surfaces?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, before I came here I was practicing on clay but it was green clay, so obviously very different. I think in the end, for me, I just have to -- I would say it's not even like a matter of transitioning from surfaces but it's more like me trusting myself.

**Q. Congratulations on your Laureus Award. What was your reaction when you got the news that you won that award? Can you walk us through the day? Who were you with? Who were you wearing in the beautiful picture that you posted?**

NAOMI OSAKA: For me, I don't exactly -- I think I was at home. My agent texted me and I wasn't with anybody. So I was just really happy by myself.

But for me, I would say the coolest thing about it, receiving the award and then they let me watch a short video, and I didn't know who the video was from, but then I watched it and it was obviously Bolt, so I thought that that was really cool of him to do. Just watching and really admiring him and still admiring him now, I was really, really happy about

that.

The dress, it was actually I think from a commercial brand, but it was like a wedding dress. I just thought it was really pretty, and it wasn't that expensive. I think it was from ASOS or something. Yeah, it wasn't like a big designer or anything.

**Q. You are one of the new faces of Louis Vuitton. Are you going to come out with a collab soon? Is it in your thoughts to come out with your own line maybe like Venus and Serena and many others?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I'm really happy to be with Louis Vuitton and currently working on something with them. Hopefully it comes out and everyone really likes it.

As for working on my own line, I would love to do that, but I know how much time and effort that would take. For me, that would be something maybe later on in my career. I'm kind of just happy doing collabs and like little one-off capsule collections right now.

**Q. What does co-chairing The Met Gala entail exactly? Because none of us know.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Well, for me it was kind of funny, because Anna Wintour called me when she asked, so that was one of my first questions I asked her, because I didn't want to stand in front of people or talk to any, like, host. I wasn't really sure what the deal was.

But the way she made it sound, like -- hmm, wow, not me forgetting most of what she said, but basically she was like I don't really have to do that much. There was just a specific set of rules. At the end she said all I had to do was show up and do a couple of interviews and things like that. Apparently I didn't have to host or anything.

**Q. This year there is two weeks between Rome and Roland Garros. Normally it's only one week. I'm curious if that change impacts at all or influences at all your preparation for Paris? Do you see it as a good thing? Is it a bad thing? Because it extends, I suppose, maybe this Europe trip by an extra week. Just wondering kind of what your general sense is of having an extra week.**

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NAOMI OSAKA: I would say my general sense for me, in the beginning I was a bit sad because I thought it would, like it definitely means more time away from home. Especially in this year it seems a bit chaotic especially with the Olympics coming for me, I feel like it's a really important time. I would have loved to be at home for more.

But at the same time I feel like I need the extra time on clay, especially with my past results. Hopefully I do better here. But I'm not really mad at, I guess, grinding on clay and practicing here for a couple more weeks.

**Q. Do you find clay more taxing mentally or physically?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I would say for me mentally. At the beginning when I first started training on clay, physically it was definitely very hard, but I'm the type that adapts quite quickly physically. So I would just say mentally it's a bit harder because you have to structure the points differently. I also think there are bad bounces and stuff. I get quite frustrated. So, yeah, mentally I think it's a bit more taxing.

**Q. How is it taxing physically?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Physically? You have to use your legs more.

**Q. You said earlier that you're kind of not mad about losing because you can learn more. How different was the debriefing and reaction to your loss last week than a normal loss when I'm sure you'd be much more upset?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I'm always upset at my losses, but I feel like for this one, at the end of the day -- how do I explain this? Like I feel like other people were more upset than me, because they look at the result and not like what happened during the match or how I fought and stuff like that.

So I feel like at the end of the day I'm the one that has to live with myself and only I know how much time and how much practice I put in before that match. So I feel like it's one of those things that I'm gauging myself, like, how I'm improving and how I'm getting better.

I know that you guys like write things that I lost or that I won, like it takes it match by match, but for me it's more like day by day like what do I learn every day type thing.

**Q. Your line, Marcus Rashford was wearing it and a few other athletes. I was curious if that's something you want for other athletes and male athletes to wear your line. I was wondering if you know who Rashford**

**is?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I actually started learning about him after I saw that photo, and my agent, he's a big football fan so he was really excited to tell me everything about him.

But, yeah, for me it would definitely be very cool if I saw athletes wearing my line, but I don't want it to feel like a force and I wouldn't want it to feel like a paid advertisement. You know, if they like it because it's cool, then that's cool. But other than that, yeah, I'm pretty chill.

**Q. On the topic of taking learnings out of your last loss, the match against Muchova, you know, you have had a week to continue to practice and train. Do you already see improvements in kind of how comfortable you are on the clay, how you're hitting the ball on clay and all that sort of stuff a week on from that match?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, for me I feel like there are things that I have improved, but the comfortability, I'm not sure if I should be telling you this, but I'm just not that comfortable on it still, and I'm not sure if it's because I need to play longer on it or if I just haven't grown up on it.

But I think as soon as I get that sort of block out of my mind, then I'll be more open to the mistakes. I'll be more open to the bad bounces and stuff like that.

So as of right now, I'm taking everything as a learning process, and I'm trying not to be so hard on myself.

**Q. A lot of power players or players who are particularly really good on hard courts throughout their careers have either made adjustments to their game on clay or some have said I'm going to play the exact same way I play on a hard court on a clay court. Sabalenka said this a little bit last week, that she's decided that playing differently on clay is just not going to help her. For you, someone who has those big weapons that can succeed on a surface like this, is that something that you and Wim have discussed in terms of how much should you adjust, how much shouldn't you, in order to kind of find that perfect balance on this surface?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I would say we definitely talked about it and we're kind of talking about it every day, but for me I feel like we both established that I'm not going to magically turn into a defensive player and I'm not magically going to start hitting my balls like three feet above the net.

So of course I'm an aggressive player, and that's what I do. That's what helps me win. So definitely wouldn't

drastically change my game at all, no.

**Q. You tweeted about this and I know this has been discussed in the past, but, yeah, most likely you will probably get to meet Rihanna at The Met Gala. How much are you going to have to prepare yourself for that? Is that going to be more nerve-racking than what you do on a tennis court?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, for me I feel like playing tennis is my job and I'm comfortable with it because I have done it so many years. I kind of know the ins and outs of how everything works.

I would say it's a bit different to meet someone that you've looked up to, because you have never -- well, I have met people that I have looked up to before, but I don't know. You never know how they are going to be. You don't know how you should react, things like that, so it's a bit out of your comfort zone.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, for me I feel like whatever makes everyone more comfortable and more safe, and I think that, you know, there is going to be a lot of people entering the country so they definitely have to make the right decisions on that. I know that the -- I don't know. I feel like it's the same. For me, I have gotten vaccinated, so I think that at the end of the day you can't force anyone to be vaccinated, but I think if you're going into the Olympics and whatever makes the host country happy.

Yeah, for me I feel like of course I would say I want the Olympics to happen, because I'm an athlete and that's sort of what I have been waiting for my entire life. But I think that there is so much important stuff going on, and especially the past year, I think a lot of unexpected things have happened. For me, I feel like if it's putting people at risk and if it's making people very uncomfortable, then it definitely should be a discussion, which I think it is as of right now. Yeah, at the end of the day I'm just an athlete, and there is a whole pandemic going on, so, yeah.

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