

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Wednesday, 8 May 2024

Roma, Italia

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



INTERNAZIONALI
BNL D'ITALIA

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N. OSAKA/C. Burel

7-6, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Can you describe your thoughts after the match.

NAOMI OSAKA: Thoughts after the match? You know, I thought the first set was really tough. I'm really glad I was able to close it in two. Overall I think mentally I tried to stay as strong as I can, so I'm really happy about that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Those couple of games towards the end of the set, seems like the forehand let you down a little bit. Going into the breaker, what were you telling yourself to kind of pull out of that, not let that spiral?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I was just telling myself, like, my forehand's one of my biggest weapons, and I shouldn't be too discouraged. I knew the shots that I was going for that I missed were, like, good intentioned.

I don't know. I was just telling myself that was probably a result of nerves and I just have to keep going for my shots and eventually or hopefully they start going in.

Q. I don't know if you've seen the film 'Challengers'.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yes.

Q. What did you think of it and what did you think specifically the most plausible and implausible bits of it were?

NAOMI OSAKA: I take all tennis moves in stride (smiling). Like, this one, I was kind of pleasantly surprised that they knew what challengers were. It kind of showed a little bit of the tennis lifestyle in the very beginning of the movie. I thought it was interesting.

I also feel like it's very cool because people are talking about the movie a lot obviously. It's bringing attention to tennis.

Q. Did you think the characters were quite plausible on an emotional level, the reactions to the setbacks that they had?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yes and no. I don't know. I just feel like it's a movie, so I try not to think it's too realistic.

For me, I wasn't really watching it for the tennis, more the storyline. I thought it was pretty interesting.

Q. As such a top player, somebody who has won so many slams, I wanted to ask you about Iga Swiatek and what you make of her now?

NAOMI OSAKA: I haven't played her.

Q. But when you did.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I always say this, but I think she's incredible. The way she's able to maintain being No.1 and constantly do well at all the tournaments is something that I honestly can't think of or can't fathom back when I was No. 1 for like five seconds (smiling). Yeah, I mean, I think she's great for the sport.

I also think watching Sabalenka doing so well is super, super fun. I hope that I'm able to play them both one day.

Q. I have a music question for you. I'm curious if you've been following any of the feud between Drake and Kendrick Lamar and if you have a side that you pick and what you make of the music that's come out of it?

NAOMI OSAKA: You know, I'm a pacifist. I'm a neutral party. However, Kendrick dropped some heat that last song. That last song is amazing, and I played it walking onto the court. Currently I think Kendrick's doing a good job.

Q. Quick follow-up on that. Won't get you in trouble. Do you think Kendrick should drop another song?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah.

Q. Or is it done?

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NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah. Sorry.

Q. You want a pile-on?

NAOMI OSAKA: Okay, but technically, though, Kendrick dropped that song, then Drake dropped 'The Heart Part 6', so technically Kendrick could drop another two if he wanted to.

Me being a Kendrick fan, it haven't gotten this many Kendrick songs in a very long time. If he wants to keep dropping...

Q. Back to tennis. In terms of getting this win, playing the way that you did, does this feel like a step forward for you? What does this victory do for you in your clay court journey this year?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think for me it wasn't really tennis-wise, it was more mental-wise. I think obviously I was up 5-3, I was serving for the set, and I lost that. I think just being able to hang in there and eventually close it on my terms is something that I'm very proud of myself for.

I obviously played a lot better in the second set. I'm hoping that when I play my match tomorrow, I'm able to learn from the mistakes that I did today and apply them better.

Q. I wanted to ask you about today Andy Murray has announced he is going to launch his last comeback. We think it will be his last year on the tour. Could you summarize his impact on tennis over his career.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, it's funny, I actually asked Wim where Murray was because I haven't seen him for a couple tournaments. I didn't know that he was out.

I mean, for me, Murray's such a great guy, such a tough competitor. I think it's really amazing the fact that he loves tennis so much and he keeps coming back. He's had all these injuries. He's kind of unrelentless in a way - or relentless, sorry. Just his ability to keep playing matches at a high level.

For me, when I think about him, when I think about the legacy that he leaves on tennis, obviously he's done a lot for can I say UK tennis or should I say British tennis.

I think as a kid watching him on TV playing these amazing battles, he's affected every tennis kid worldwide.

Q. For women's tennis he's been outspoken.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, he's been very vocal. I know all tennis players and all female athletes really appreciate it.

Q. In the conversations that you have with Wim or even former coaches, playing on clay, is there much back and forth between you guys in terms of the push-pull of improving the skills that would make you feel more comfortable on the surface like movement or tactics or things like that versus just being Naomi, just bang the ball, just play your hard court game on clay and see how it goes? I could see there being two schools of thought on that. Has that been a push and pull within you? How do you kind of come down on it?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, it's been kind of tough for me because when I played my last match in Madrid, I was obviously a lot more defensive than I would have wanted. To be honest, I'm not sure if that was because of clay court. I think I just wanted to play a little bit more rallies with her.

Today I told Wim that I wanted to come out a lot stronger. Obviously that didn't happen. So, yeah, there is a little bit of back and forth with me.

Sometimes I think that Ostapenko won French Open, so maybe I should just stick to my guns.

To be honest, I don't really try to bang the ball. That's, like, just what happens. I think for me, I just want to put more spin on it while rotating it a lot more. I think when I'm finally able to achieve that, it will obviously be quite heavy, so I thought that will be my clay court tennis.

Q. I'm writing a piece about rankings. Maybe when you were less experienced, was there ever a time when the ranking was too much in your head and you were thinking too much of points instead of developing as a player and winning matches?

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, I've never been a ranking player. Then someone's going to pull out a quote that I was a ranking player (laughter).

In my head, I was never a ranking player unless it was to get in the main draw or to be seeded for a slam. That for me is obviously very important. Then maybe to be in the top 10.

The only real time I've ever thought about rankings was when I played Kvitova for the No. 1 spot in Australia. That was very stressful for me.

I try not to think too much about it, yeah.

Thanks.

