

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Saturday, 11 May 2024

Roma, Italia

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference

N. OSAKA/D. Kasatkina

6-3, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Naomi, congratulations. Can you share your thoughts on the match today.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I thought today's match was pretty good. But I went in I guess just really focused because I knew how good of a player she was.

I'm really happy with the result, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You mentioned practicing with Dasha before. Was it Madrid? What did you learn from that that you took into today's match?

NAOMI OSAKA: It was in Madrid. I remember her beating me like 6-0, or 6-1, if I'm being generous to myself (smiling).

Yeah, I just remember thinking, 'cause we were warming up before the actual practice set, and I was hanging in there with her. For some reason when the match started, I didn't really know how to play on clay. I didn't know how to structure the point.

So obviously that's what I tried to learn a lot in Mallorca. I'm very happy that apparently I figured it out.

Q. You were constructing the points, being more methodical about using heavy spin when you were in tough defensive positions, getting yourself to the net as well. Showed a lot of patience today. Was that the game plan against her? Sometimes players are very tempted to try to hit through her. That can be a trap sometimes with her.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, honestly I just wanted to play smart tennis. I wanted to play the higher-percentage ball no matter what.

I think in that match, when it got tight, I did overhit maybe



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one or two shots. I kind of realized that and I tried to get back in the groove of things.

For me, I'm very aware that I can't beat her defensively, so obviously I have to go for my shots. I don't want to play flat here either.

Just being smarter with the hard shots that I do hit.

Q. Three matches in a row on clay. Congrats.

NAOMI OSAKA: Thank you (smiling).

Q. You'd never beaten a top-20 player on clay. Now you've been them twice in a row. Is there a connection from being away from the game and growing and learning and what's happening now for you, which is unprecedented?

NAOMI OSAKA: It's not unprecedented (smiling).

I'm very grateful to be back. I'm very grateful to be healthy because I know how much hard work it took for me to be here.

Also I am just very inspired by the players that I'm watching now. I'm watching a lot of tennis. I wish with my whole heart to be where they are, so I'm doing whatever it takes.

I don't know. I feel like I'm just clawing my way back to hopefully where I think I belong.

Q. Regarding the heavy ball you've been trying to hit with spin, has that required any technical changes to your stroke or is it more mental and staying disciplined?

NAOMI OSAKA: It's definitely more mental. I could always do it. I'm a little impatient. Obviously when you hit a heavier ball, for me, I feel like I think about a moon ball. It didn't really click until I was watching Nadal play and seeing how he actually accelerates so much when he's doing that, knowing that a heavier ball sometimes is more difficult than a flatter shot.

Yeah, I feel like I just did a lot of homework.

Q. You mentioned Rafa. You said that you've been



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watching a lot of tennis. Who else have you been watching? How do you watch tennis? What is it you're looking for?

NAOMI OSAKA: I watch on the TV. When I'm on, like, the grounds, I'll watch anything that's playing on the TV. Before I played, Iga was on the TV, so I watched her. I watched Carlos when I was in Mallorca. Rublev. Yeah, honestly I'll watch whoever's on TV.

Q. I think people on Twitter are calling you 'Clayomi' now.

NAOMI OSAKA: Please don't (laughter). Please. I think I need more clay credentials for that. But I'm happy that they're happy, so...

Q. Speaking about players you do watch. Do you watch a lot of Serena's old matches, obviously with the similarities in your general game styles, what she was able to do, what changes she seemed to make when she played on clay?

NAOMI OSAKA: You know there's like a hallway to the gym that has all the champions. I see Serena and Sharapova on there. It makes me very inspired knowing that hard-hitters can play well on clay. Of course, when I was younger, I watched both of them extensively.

But currently I didn't rewind any Serena tapes 'cause I still feel really sad that she's not here. Especially since Rafa is doing his last, like, hurrah, it makes me feel a bit more sad.

Honestly, you brought up a good point, so I'll have some more homework today.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think definitely during the match, of course, when she hit great balls, I congratulated her. I think it might be a little more for me to make a mental note that, like, she's a great player, she hit a great ball, and there's nothing I can complain about. The only thing I can do is keep moving forward that. Might be more for me.

Also I do think, after Shai was born, my mentality is that I'm a lot more hungry. I think winning three matches here is something that I'm extremely positive and happy about. I don't take it for granted at all. I want to keep going.

I don't know. I just want to see how far I can go. I don't know, I'm also really excited to see Shai, so it makes me happy every day to wake up. It's like T minus nine days till I see her, so...

I mean, I FaceTime her a lot. I get a lot of videos. She knows how to, like, kiss the phone. If I FaceTime her and I go (kissing sounds into the phone), then she'll kiss the phone back. I don't know, it's really cute. I don't feel like I'm missing too much 'cause I'm getting so many updates, yeah.

I'm not going to tell you exactly what's in my book. I just keep a lot of they're like affirmations, things that I want to accomplish during the match. I'll write down things that I observe during the match. For me, it's helpful 'cause I get distracted easy. It kind of keeps me on task.

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