

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Naomi Osaka

Press Conference

ZHENG QINWEN/N. Osaka

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Tough competitor today. Your thoughts on your performance today and in Rome.

NAOMI OSAKA: I think, I mean, I don't feel like I played that well today. Overall I'm really happy I was able to fight a lot in the second set.

I think I'm happy with my performance in Rome. It's been a while since I played well on -- I guess I've never played well on clay, so I guess I'm happy (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You hadn't won two games back to back on clay since 2019. Do you leave Rome more confident to French Open?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think I definitely feel a lot more confident leaving than when I came. I hope that I can learn a lot from the match I played today and apply it and do really well in Paris.

Q. In terms of just breaking down the match itself, she was defending her backhand corner surprisingly well. It seemed like a lot of those forehands into that side would have been winners on a hard court, but... Did that surprise you at all, how many of those loopy kind of backhand stabs were landing within the baseline? Over time, were you getting frustrated you couldn't put the ball past her?

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, I wasn't really surprised or frustrated. I mean, she's in the top 10, so I just really expect I guess amazing tennis from a top-10 player.

I think for me, if I was frustrated, it was more from myself. I don't know. I feel like I expected a lot from her, and it made me very overwhelmed with my own game. I don't really know how to articulate that properly.

I think sometimes I felt like I had no choice but to do



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something because she might play it this way. In reality, it wasn't like that at all. I kind of only understood that in the second set. That's why it was a bit closer. In the first set, I definitely overwhelmed myself after the first two or three games.

Q. You're one of four players who made the fourth round here entering with a special ranking. I want to ask how important is the special ranking rule to help you come back? But also knowing you have a limited number, what do you have to consider when you're planning your schedule?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I definitely think the special ranking helps me out a lot. I'm definitely very grateful for it. I know that there are a bunch of really, really amazing players that also use the special ranking.

I think for me, I kind of leave that more up to my team how to use it. For me, I feel like when I enter a tournament, I hope to do well enough that I won't need to use a special ranking that much anymore. That's kind of always been my plan.

Q. Why did you feel you needed to play far outside of your comfort zone? Is that a different feeling to the way you'd approach a match like this back when you were a top player?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think it's been a while since I played a top-10 player. I don't know. I just felt like something drastically different is going to happen. I wasn't as experienced.

I'm pretty I guess happy that I was able to play this match because I will learn a lot from it. I'll learn that the level's not that different. It's kind of just more key moments I would say, staying mentally very resilient in myself and my abilities.

I think it just got to a point that I wasn't really too confident in myself. I think you could kind of see that. Then I picked it back up, of course, yeah.

Q. What is your mindset, or if you've talked to Wim and the team yet, in terms of you have about two weeks until Roland Garros, are you going to do a training block or go straight to Paris, back to Mallorca?



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What do you want to do?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think I'm probably going to do a really solid training block again. That's been working out for me, so hopefully it works out even more.

After that I'll go to Paris and see Shai, so I'm really happy about that.

Q. This is obviously a great week, two top-20 wins. What has it been accepting gradual progress? I mean, at the beginning of the year you knew it was going to take a while. So accepting three wins as a great result, building on that, rather than a final in the first tournament back.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, that's a really good question for me because I'm still trying to figure it out (smiling).

It's really tough. Also I feel very grateful at the same time. A little bit of a mix of emotions.

I think to be in this position that I am right now, and to have been able to beat Kasatkina in straight sets is something that I'm really happy about. But currently I'm talking to you because I lost a match.

I don't know. I have to process things a little bit differently but also accept the last time I played quarters in Rome, I didn't play seeded players probably. I don't remember too well. I don't think I did.

My daughter's not even one yet, so I have to understand that. I'm very impatient. But I'll try to be patient. I'll try my best, so...

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: I would say I'm very happy with the level that changed from Madrid to Rome. I think, like, the steady progression is something that I'm very confident about.

But if I were to take away one thing that I'm confident in myself, hmm, I think from all the matches that I've played here I'm trying to analyze, I think I've hit a couple really good backhands when I'm in the backhand cross-court. I'm very confident and happy about that. But I think when I have to hit forehand, sometimes I second-guess myself. I did that today a lot. I think just knowing that I have to hit through the ball is something that I'm probably going to work on when I get to Mallorca.

Shai is a really curious kid. I mean, she's still a baby. She likes to look at things. She probably won't remember, but I would love to take her to all the famous landmarks and

take pictures so I can show her when she grows up. But she's probably going to do that every year, so... It's going to be her first year, so it's a special one.

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