

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



N. OSAKA/E. Cocciaretto

6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Naomi, welcome back to Miami, and congratulations. If you could just give us your thoughts on the keys to today's victory.

NAOMI OSAKA: Keys, well, just honestly I think I played my game. I have never played her before, but she was honestly, like, really good at forehands and backhands too. I just tried to stay really -- I don't know how to describe it. Just really focused on myself, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. In terms of just the level and how pleased you were with that performance, from the outside it looked very good. Is it as good as what you felt, let's say, in Doha in terms of some of those matches? How would you rate it?

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, this is probably the most free that I was able to hit my balls, like, the closest to the feeling I want to capture going forward. I would say this is probably my best match in terms of shot-making. I felt like the balls I wanted to hit were there.

Yeah, I'm pretty happy with this one.

Q. Next up, Elina Svitolina. She's been back for, what, a year and she's already back inside the top 20. Is she kind of an inspiration for you for how fast somebody can get back up the rankings after time off to be a mom?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, definitely. I remember watching her playing Wimbledon while I was pregnant, and I remember thinking that I want to be there too one day.

I think it's, I don't know, she's always just been a really great player, so it's not surprising to me she's back in the top 20. It's more like that's where she belongs.

Q. I wanted to ask you, being a mom, and there are so

many moms now on the tour, didn't used to be the case, it was kind of strange to see a mom on the tour, now there are so many. Do you all bond? Do you talk about motherhood-type things? How does that work? Do you feel like a special bond with the other moms on the tour? Do you talk about, like, with moms who have older kids about what to expect when yours gets older and things like that?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I feel a great deal of respect, and I think it's very mutual (smiling). But I'm not in a group chat, if that's what you're asking.

Yeah, but, you know, I'm not going to be the one to open that conversation (laughter). But yeah, I feel like I realize how many moms I have around me, and I'm really grateful for that, and I'm really happy that I guess my daughter is the youngest in the bunch, so I am able to ask questions when I need to.

Q. In terms of just being back in Miami, I presume your family was here and were able to watch and everything. Is part of, I don't know, the way you were able to play today, the freeness, part of just feeling at home here, having the support? Or maybe it's just the court and the balls and the way it sits? I don't know.

NAOMI OSAKA: I don't know. My mom and my sister were here. To be honest, I was incredibly nervous before the match, so I don't know, probably had to do with my mom.

But yeah, I feel like going into the match I just knew that I have played well here before, and if anything, I can count on, I guess, my reflexes hopefully doing something. I really think I didn't need to rely on that as a crutch.

I honestly came out probably playing or swinging the best that I have in, I guess, since I have been back.

Q. Slightly unrelated, but if you reflect on trying to do something for the first time versus doing something you have already done and trying to do it the second, third, fourth time, how do you contrast the differences? Which one is more difficult, in your

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experience?

NAOMI OSAKA: Hmm. Honestly probably trying to do it the first time. I think you, I guess, don't know you're able to achieve it yet, and then when you finally do, it's kind of like a surprise and also a relief all in one.

I guess when you're aware that you have already achieved something, you have this inner confidence in yourself. While it is a little bit, I guess, negative to think, like, if you have already achieved something, why is it so difficult to do it again, I do feel like it's, I don't know, every day is a new day, and there are so many new faces on the tour that I see, like, doing so amazing, and it's incredibly inspiring.

So I'm glad that I have achieved a couple things in my career, and I hope that I'm able to do it again.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I felt like for me, playing against my opponent today, I thought she played really smart. I felt like for me it was almost, in a way, a relief that she played so smart, because I felt like the shots that I needed to play I knew that I needed to play them, so it gave me, like, an extra boost.

I also felt like my footwork was much better today. In my match against Mertens, I didn't feel like I was stepping around to hit my forehand as well as I did today, and I think that's one of the most important parts of why I won my match.

Yeah, I would say a lot has happened since that match. I think, for me, when I think of Svitolina, I think of her as a fighter. I feel like she's the type of person that would never give up on a single ball. Obviously that's why she is where she is right now. I also feel like it's really incredible for her to have had a kid and already doing so well and winning so many matches.

But I don't know. When I think of her, I just think of her as, like, a really amazing tennis player. I don't put a rival label on it. I honestly don't put that label on anyone except Barty. So hopefully she comes back too and she's inspired. But yeah.

Yeah, I mean, I don't know. I actually haven't seen Kei yet. Is he playing tomorrow? Okay. That's going to be super exciting.

Ah. Who's he playing? It's okay. I'll look at the schedule.

I think for me Kei holds a lot of nostalgic feelings. I think he's honestly one of the top players that first started

engaging in conversation with me, and I remember my first US Open we both had an amazing run. Well, the first US Open that I won.

He was, for me, felt like a comrade. I really loved playing tournaments where he was in, because I felt like it was very, I guess, inspiring and also very fun for the Japanese fans.

So yeah. I feel incredibly happy that he's back, and I can't wait to see him.

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