

# BNP Paribas Open

Saturday, March 9, 2024

## Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



N. OSAKA/L. Samsonova

7-5, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. I got to watch a bit of that match. There were some moments and points where you gave a little smile and giggle. You seemed to be having a lot of fun on court. Am I getting the right impression?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I hope so (smiling). Yeah, I mean, I think, like, for me, I just want to have a lot more fun on the court.

I think, like, I don't want to say in the beginning of, like, my comeback-ish. In Australia I was really hard on myself and I found myself not really celebrating just being on the court. So I think in this tournament, I just really wanted to emphasize that I don't expect myself to win every match, but I want to have fun and enjoy the moments, yeah, while I can.

**Q. In January it seemed like with some of those matches that you played, the level was quite high, except for maybe the big points. Those were the ones you seem like you regretted. Seems like in the last couple of matches it felt like the bigger points were starting to flip your way. Is that how you're seeing it? What do you think is the difference there?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Definitely I think match play is really important for me and just getting in certain situations and not feeling like I'm unsure of what to do.

But I definitely felt like I was more confident today with, like, the set point and just kind of trusting myself and knowing that no matter what happens, like, go for my shots and don't live life with regret.

I think of course in Australia, like, those, what was it, like 0 to 12 breakpoints or something, I definitely felt like now I do a lot more with my shots (smiling).

**Q. In your on-court after the match you brought up**

**fans being with you through growing points. Wonder if you have anything more that you want to say about what you meant by that.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Basically like my whole career, if you did a deep dive (smiling).

Yeah, it's funny. I'm just thinking about, I guess, Courtney, she met me in Stanford, so I guess even now doing interviews, I think I'm a little bit, hopefully a bit of a better talker, but I guess it's just things like that. And for me, I'm just really grateful for whoever followed me throughout my journey and who continues to follow me throughout my journey.

So I hold a lot of, like, a special place in my heart for everyone that supported me throughout the years, because I could have been kind of annoying at some times, but I think the beauty is everyone is just trying to figure it out.

**Q. Sometimes people remember the first time they do different things. Do you remember, I believe, Palo Alto, Stanford, was your first big tournament, do you remember much about that? What was it like to go out on that court and go through all of the things that are involved in a tournament?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, it's funny. I vividly remember that tournament, and I have a bad memory, so I guess that tournament stands out a lot for me.

I played Stosur, and it was kind of the first tournament that made me feel like I could play with the big dogs.

I just remember after I played my match, they asked me to do press. I've never done press before. So I was fully, like, about to leave, and I didn't have, like, a change of clothes, so I threw on just a random shirt. It was not okay. But yeah, I don't know, it was kind of just like my introduction into the tour and, like, how professionals really navigate.

**Q. I asked Ons this and I want to ask you, a few years ago athletes needed media to share their story but now you have social media and you can tell your**



**perspective any time you want. What do you think our role is now for you?**

NAOMI OSAKA: You know, I know this is going to sound weird coming from me, but I think it's kind of beautiful the way that I could obviously tell what I feel in my story, but I think it's really cool that you can look at me and kind of write in your words. You know what I mean? It's like seeing me from the outside is obviously different than how I see myself.

I just kind of think that's awesome, and it might be weird coming from me with my history, but yeah.

**Q. Just coming back here to Indian Wells, have you found that when you're playing your best, the way you strike the ball here, the way the conditions kind of play in, is there a sense of a little bit of kind of familiarity in terms of what you want to do out on that court, or does it feel very different than in the years past?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I would say I'm aware of what I want to do, and I have a plan. I think you can see glimpses of my plan while I'm playing, but there's still a few creaks that I want to get out, and thankfully I'm able to play another match and able to have another opportunity to I guess execute my vision a lot more.

But I don't know. I feel like I was kind of pushing today, but also my opponent was, like, really aggressive, so I felt like I had no choice. I just kind of ended up with that scoreline, so...

**Q. Naomi, Coco Gauff is on the cover of "Vogue" magazine, a stunning cover, and you've been on the cover of so many fashion magazines, sports magazines, cultural magazines. Is there one or two that stands out to you as your favorites?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, cover? I don't know. They're all, like, really different and beautiful. I don't want to say, like, specific ones, because I don't want to get in trouble. But I think, like, my first cover I did after I won the US Open the first time, it was "GQ Japan," it was really fun.

And I guess "Vogue," too, "Vogue Japan," even though that was, like, right after the French. So I don't know. Like, I got in trouble for that, but I promise I shot that way before, so... (Smiling.)

**Q. Looking forward, are you someone who looks ahead, do you know who you'll play next?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Wim told me, yeah.

**Q. You've played a few times before. What do you expect from that match? Talk us through your preparation for that.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, honestly, I just remember -- of course, she's a great player. The last time I remember playing her was 2020, the Cincinnati that was at the US Open, unless I played her later and I just have no memory of that.

She's a great player. She is consistent, and I think she, for me, gives me just trouble with -- I don't know how to say this -- like, her ball tempo. So it's going to be really interesting.

Well, what I see is that a lot of people are double faulting, me included. Yeah, it's going to be really interesting.

**Q. Curious if you were a big "Dragon Ball" watcher when you were young and just what your memories are of that. In this sport maybe anime is not the most prevalent thing in it but can you articulate to people what his work meant to you and to a lot of kids out there.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, honestly, I wasn't really the biggest "Dragon Ball" watcher, but I think it's kind of incredible how much his work has affected, like, all the other mangas. I was reading this article of all the other mangas saying he inspired them to start working.

I don't know. It's really sad, because you think of, like, the train of, for example, in tennis, like, Serena influenced so many people to play tennis, and I think he, I guess, in the world, is as big and as inspirational.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Really? Oh, I didn't even know that.

Yeah, I mean, I vividly remember the 4-1 in the first set. I don't really remember in the second set, but I think for me I just didn't want to make the same mistakes. And honestly, she played, I thought, really well. I'm not sure if she thinks she didn't play really well.

But there were just moments where I felt like she stepped her game up. Wim was talking to me, and he told me that there's going to be some fantastic shots that she hits and I just have to accept that and move on. I do think in the first set I kind of dropped a little bit, but in the second set I think I maintained my level throughout as best as I could.

He told me that before the match, and then I guess during the match I was just conversing with him about, like, some

doubts that I had.

Sorry, I have to think about this. (Gesturing.)

You know, I think I use mostly my left hand, because I realize if I go on the run, sometimes I'll just, like, fully use my left hand, yeah. And then obviously my forehand is my right hand.

I'm so unsensitive. I don't really feel much. If I were to feel anything, it would be the court and the fact that the ball sits up a little higher when it bounces. Other than that, I'm really not the one you ask questions about balls.

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