

BNP Paribas Open

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Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



E. MERTENS/N. Osaka

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THE MODERATOR: Naomi, tough one today. Can you give us your thoughts on the match.

NAOMI OSAKA: I thought, I don't know, I feel like I had a plan today, and I didn't really execute that well on my plan. But I also haven't played her in a while, so it was kind of surprising, her game, a little bit.

Yeah, that's basically it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. In terms of what you wanted to execute today, what was the plan? She has recently been able to kind of hit the ball bigger a little bit and be more aggressive sometimes. Is that what you mean by taken aback compared to what she was doing against you before?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I definitely wanted to be the aggressive one. I felt like in some ways I was kind of on defense a lot, and I wasn't able to hit the ball as like heavy as I usually feel like I should.

And then in the ways that she surprised me, I think her service speed probably went up since I last played her. She kind of forced me into the backhand a lot, I felt.

Q. Do you feel like each week you're getting closer to the version of yourself where you want to be? I know it's hard losing some matches, but seems like you're winning more than you're losing these days.

NAOMI OSAKA: I hope so (smiling).

Q. When you're winning more than you're losing these days, I don't know, how does it feel? Does it feel like there is improvement going on?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I definitely feel like there's improvement. The match I played before this one, I guess I beat the highest-ranked person I've played so far, so I'm

happy about that.

But I'm just trying not to be too hard on myself right now, but I feel like in some ways I improved a lot from Doha. I think I fought a lot harder or I tried to fight a lot harder and find solutions to problems that were in front of me.

But clearly it didn't work out too well, so I hope that the more matches I play, the more I can find solutions.

Q. As you go through this section of kind of your career of trying to get back, how different does this feel emotionally or motivation-wise or goal-setting-wise compared to, like, before you were a Grand Slam champion and you were trying to prove to yourself whether you could do things and you didn't know if you could do them? Is it, like, completely different than that?

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, that's interesting.

Q. You know what I mean?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I feel like it is completely different, like, because you know that you've done it, so you're desperately trying to do it again. I think when I was younger and I haven't, like, achieved, I guess, anything, it was always, like, a wonder or a possibility, and I wasn't too hard on myself, because I was always just reaching the third round in slams anyways (smiling).

Yeah, it is quite different from now, because I feel like I should be able to get to that level. Obviously -- well, not obviously, but I feel like I've done it once before, so I should be able to do it again. Yeah.

Q. Would you want to go back to that mentality, or would you rather have this mentality of knowing you could do it versus not knowing?

NAOMI OSAKA: It's like a little bit, like, ignorance is bliss, but I'd prefer to have, like, the knowledge I have now.

So I would never be the one to choose to go back to the past, so I guess I would prefer now.



Q. I wonder how you define success or how you will define success in this second career, if you will. Is it only No. 1, Grand Slam titles? I know you can expect that, you have a right to expect that from yourself, or is there another definition of success that might fit?

NAOMI OSAKA: You know, like, honestly, I'm not really chasing the No. 1 spot right now. Like, that's such a, if I could get there in, like, three years or, I don't even know what's going to happen in that time, but that was never really the reason I came back.

I wanted to win more slams. That's why I came back. But I think I determine success right now just by the effort that I put in, and I feel like today I don't think I played well at all, but I tried every point.

I think, like, before I was pregnant, there were a couple of matches that I didn't try as hard as I tried today, and I feel like I can walk off the court knowing that, although I'm sad about the loss, I know that I tried every possible way to get back in the match. I guess that's how I determine success right now.

Q. The other day you said that Shai was really enjoying the desert.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, ruined her dreams.

Q. What does that mean? Sometimes parents project a little bit, emotions. What were you trying to say by that statement or does it mean she was sleeping very nicely?

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, both. She was going to the zoo and stuff and we were taking her out, and she sleeps very good here. Hopefully that trend continues (smiling).

But yeah, I think she enjoyed the change of scenery, and she enjoyed being outside, not too long, though, because she was going to get sunburnt. I took her on a hike and stuff.

Q. Are you in any hurry to get to Miami or do you think you'll hang out around here for a bit, LA?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I'm probably going to go to LA for a little bit. I haven't eaten Haitian food in, like, three years, so I'm very excited to go back to Miami.

Q. You were talking just the other day, a couple weeks ago, about possibly facing Iga, maybe looking forward to that match but you were stressing against Karolina a little bit. Were you thinking ahead today about

possibly facing Coco in the next round?

NAOMI OSAKA: Well, I didn't know that, so no. Yeah. Wow, that's a surprise. It was honestly, though, you know how, like, the bottom half, the top half, everyone plays. I was, like, oh, it would be cool to play Sabalenka, but I don't ever look at the draw. So no, I wasn't paying attention. I was just trying to focus on the match today.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, it was definitely very hard to get broken twice in the first set. I did feel like it was a really good effort on my part to get back in the match, but I don't know. It was weird playing today, because I felt like my ball didn't have as much pop on it as it normally should.

I don't know if that's just credit to her, but I'm usually the one to be quite pessimistic on myself. It kind of felt like once I was back in the match, I kind of went a little bit defensive again.

Yeah, I guess this is the type of match that I had to play, because I haven't played one like this in a very long time.

Yeah, I mean, I think my feelings have changed a lot. I definitely take wins not for granted anymore. I think I appreciate them a lot, and I know how hard I worked to get to this position, and I also know that while I was pregnant last year, that my opponents were playing the entire time.

Yeah, definitely more grateful for wins, and unfortunately losses still make me as sad as they did before.

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