

# Gippsland Trophy

Wednesday, 3 February 2021

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



N. OSAKA/K. Boulter

3-6, 6-3, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Talk us through the tough three-setter and your comeback there.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, today was really tough for me. It just felt like a new experience playing here again after such a long while. For me, I thought she played really well. I sort of had to raise my level, kind of go within myself.

Yeah, I think you could tell that from watching the match.

**Q. What do you think you were able to do in that second set to turn things around?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I think I was able to -- for me I felt the entire first set and sort of halfway into the second set, I felt like I was on my back foot a lot. I felt like I was letting her dictate most of the balls. For me, I felt like I never really settled that well.

I think in the second and third set I was sort of able to find what I needed to do, sort of impose my pace onto the rally, as well.

**Q. Did you feel after dropping that first set, in terms of I guess just kind of mentally and emotionally how you reacted, did you start to feel emotional or were you pretty calm?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I was actually more calm after losing the first set because I felt like for me, I just wanted to be able to play well. The biggest concern for me in the first set was winning or losing. But after not playing that well in the first, I just wanted to play well and hopefully push her to a third. So that was my biggest goal in the second. I was able to do that.

I just tried to keep it rolling.

**Q. In terms of getting a test like that, three-setter against a player that is your age range, seemed to be playing well, what does that tell you where your**

**game is at, mentality, being able to come through a match like that?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I couldn't have asked for a better, like, preparation match. I think it was very different from my first-round match. For me, that's something I couldn't practice. Like I can't practice a match like this. So I'm very happy with how it went actually. Even though it was long, I think there are a lot of things that I learned in this match.

For me, I feel like it's nice to play someone like Cornet and then someone like Boulter because they have two different styles. That's something I'm going to have to deal with in a Grand Slam setting, too.

**Q. What has it been like to have the opportunity to play in front of crowds again? You had the experience at the exhibition in Adelaide, but in a real match in real conditions, how has it affected your rhythm and how much have you enjoyed the atmosphere?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, for me, I feel really happy to be here. I feel very happy to, like, interact with the crowd. I think these are the moments that I was wishing for when I was in quarantine. Even in New York I really missed, like, seeing people in the audience.

So, yeah, just to have this moment is really nice.

**Q. What extra energy, if any, does having that extra support in the crowd give you? How difficult was it playing through the US Open?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Actually in New York I missed the crowd, but I was able to sort of just focus on tennis. So in a way it was kind of good for me because sometimes when I play with the crowd, I want to impress them, so I tend to do things that maybe aren't the greatest in the situation.

But yeah, the crowd usually gives me a lot of energy because I feel like it's nice to have people watch what you love to do.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the sort of unusual setup this week with so many tournaments, men's, women's, team events going on simultaneously.**



**How does it feel different than a regular non-Grand Slam tournament? I don't know if you took a look at the schedule today, a ton of Grand Slam champions, dozens of matches everywhere. Is the locker room more crowded than normally outside of a Grand Slam?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, for me, I just feel like this whole situation is a bit unusual because we're at the Australian Open, like, where it's being held, but we're not playing it quite yet.

But, yeah, honestly I've heard that there is quite a lot of matches being played today. But for me, I just focus on myself and focus on the match that I have to play.

But I'm actually really excited to watch many of the matches being played later on today.

**Q. We've seen you out in the stands watching matches. Is that what you mean? What do you like about doing that as opposed to, say, hanging out in the hotel and watching on TV? Why do you prefer to actually be out there?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I just like watching matches in person because I feel like you can gauge the speed of the ball, you can sort of see the atmosphere, feel the conditions. I think, I don't know, it's just much more engaging than watching on TV.

So whenever I get the chance, I'd rather watch tennis in person.

**Q. Either when you've been able to watch matches as a player in person or as a fan back in the day, what's the best live match you've ever sat courtside or in a suite for and watched from front to back?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I really liked Murray versus Nishioka in the US Open last year. I thought it was really fun to watch. I really love both of them, so I wasn't really rooting for anyone in particular.

For me, that's a match that stands out. I think it's because it's the most recent match I've watched from start to finish in person. Honestly before that, I don't really recall. Probably when I was a child.

**Q. Looking ahead, you'll play either Konta or Begu. Can you talk about the challenges of playing either.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I've played Konta a couple times. I've actually never beaten her. If I have to play her, I'm really looking forward to that challenge. I know that she's a really good player. It will definitely be very difficult for me.

Then Begu, I've never played her before. I'm not that

familiar with her game, to be honest. So if I do end up having to play her, I'll definitely have to talk to Wim a lot, which I'm sure he'll be very excited for, to give me a lot of his notes (smiling).

Yeah, for me, I'm excited to play whoever.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think in the second set I was able to get a lot of my nerves out and I was able to sort of analyze the situation more. For me, she has a really amazing forehand, so it felt like no matter what I did on the second serve she would be able to hit a winner on the forehand return. I tried to avoid that a lot. So I ended up going to the backhand quite more than I wanted to.

And, yeah, from strategy that's sort of what I based it on.

Yeah, definitely, I want to win French and Wimbledon. It's something that you feel like you want to complete a set of something that you don't have.

But for me right now, I feel like I'm just focusing on being here. Of course, that's playing this tournament and then the Australian Open. I would say, like, in this year, I know the circumstances are really weird, but I would just love to play the Olympics. I think if that were to happen, that would be my main goal even ahead of Grand Slams.

Yeah, for me, I feel like when I was little, I just based my entire existence on being a tennis player. I feel like for me doing various things outside of tennis gives me a balance. It gives me something to think about outside of tennis.

If I were to lose a match, I have so many more things to do. So I would say definitely there's a lot of things that I'm thinking about currently. Hopefully I'll keep doing more.

Biggest priority outside of the tennis court? To do cool stuff. I don't know. To do stuff that no one's ever done. Yeah, just to do cool stuff.

So I didn't change my strings or anything. They're the same from New York. But my clothes that I'm wearing this tournament, they're my Wimbledon clothes from last year that I didn't get to wear.

So I've watched Demon Slayer. It's one of my most favorite anime. I was really hooked on it so I made my mom start watching it. She really likes it, too.

For me, I feel like it's a very interesting anime to watch. So then I just started reading the manga when I ran out of the episodes. I finished it. Yeah, I really liked it.

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