

Gippsland Trophy

Friday, 5 February 2021
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



N. OSAKA/I. Begu

7-5, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Talk us through the process of the last few days, off yesterday, coming back and winning your match today.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, it was really interesting. I thought that it was kind of nice to have a day break, though, because I'm not really that used to playing back-to-back-to-back-to-back matches. Yeah, I literally just laid in my bed all day yesterday and then today just got ready for tonight.

Q. After your first-round match you talked about how nervous you were against Cornet. Now that you have a couple of matches under your belt, how are the feelings mentally and also with where your game is at?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think now I'm kind of relaxed. Today I actually had a lot of fun trying to figure her out, because I have never played her.

So I just feel like I'm really glad I'm playing this tournament, because it's given me a chance to analyze my opponents. I feel like I'm getting better at that, as all the matches or as I keep playing more matches.

Glad to be here still.

Q. You said that you don't normally play back-to-back-to-back-to-back matches. How do you feel about playing potentially back to back this weekend ahead of the Australian Open? Also, what did you think of the draw you got for the Australian Open?

NAOMI OSAKA: It's funny, because for some reason the fact that they changed the third set into a 10-point tiebreaker makes me feel like it's gotten way, like, easier in a way, like less physically draining. So I'm actually kind of excited about it.

And then what do I think of my draw? I'm really glad, because normally I have this superstition of not looking at my draw or the next tournament while I'm playing a

tournament.

So I'm glad I looked at it, because I was sure I was going to get questions or go on the Internet and see something. But, yeah, I know that my first opponent is Pavlyuchenkova. And then, I didn't really see the whole draw. I saw the projected draw of me. And I actually, I'm kind of excited.

I like playing tough people, especially in slams. Honestly I've never seen a projected draw come true, so I guess it will be interesting for all of us.

Q. You just said you enjoyed figuring out your opponent today. Can you explain the process of figuring out today's match? First set was quite tight, but second set you took quite easily. Can you talk about that.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think just not knowing her game style or her pace of ball for me was the most difficult part.

And also, her serve for me was quite different from anyone that I've ever played. So I think just putting those pieces together in the first set and then kind of running away with it in the second. I think in the second I had a more clear plan of what I was supposed to do and what worked for me in the first set.

So, yeah.

Q. You talked about your love of the Olympics here and you're one of the poster athletes of the games. Was it disappointing to hear the comments from Yoshiro Mori about women?

NAOMI OSAKA: So honestly I haven't really read up on it. I was told it, because I was told that I might get questions on it. But I haven't really read on it. Maybe if you're here tomorrow you can ask me the same thing because I'll read it tonight.

Q. There were quite a few injury withdrawals from people in both the women's and men's tournaments today. That could be injuries or could just be preserving themselves ahead of the AO. With that in mind, what is an ideal amount of matches? You had three wins now. Are you, I'm good, or you need more? How do you approach a lead-up week like

this?

NAOMI OSAKA: Well, I think this is a special case. Normally I would never play, like, a tournament so close to the slam, but I think times are changing.

For me, I feel like it depends for everybody. For me, I feel like I played well in New York. I played the lead-up tournament that was right before that.

So normally I think two or three matches is good for everybody, but for me, right now I just kind of want to see how far I can take it.

Q. A general question about when you change coaches, how difficult a process do you find that, particularly when you have to tell someone you've worked with and someone who's probably a lot older, more experienced than you, that you no longer want to work with them and you want to change? How difficult is that?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, for me I think it's, the most difficult part is that you have traveled with them everywhere and they sort of become like your family.

I feel like everyone -- I don't know. It's like a mutual respect thing. Like, you respect the fact that you want to go different ways. For me, I feel like usually when I split with someone it's because things aren't really working out the way that either of us want it to work out.

Yeah, there's a lot of mutual respect.

Q. Tell me, when you decide on a new coach, I'm sure you obviously speak to that new coach and agree to things. But do you then leave it to your agent to discuss details, things like the length of a contract, how much they will be paid, that sort of thing?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, because that's what an agent is for.

Q. After three matches and kind of different types of matches that you've had to play this week, do you feel like you've knocked off the rust to the extent that there was any rust going into Melbourne?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I would say that I feel like I'm getting more comfortable as I play more matches, but I'm not sure about knocking off the rust. I feel like the nerves that I have for a Grand Slam are very different than the nerves that I have for a regular tournament.

So maybe the rust for the Grand Slam might be there.

Q. You mentioned Cincinnati and playing that ahead of New York, and obviously it didn't impact you

negatively playing those three weeks, I guess, in a row. What did you take out of that experience of playing in a week ahead of a slam that you've kind of learned to apply maybe this time around, as well?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think what I've learned is that I take each match as an experience, and I try to -- I honestly try to practice things in my matches before the slams, just to, like, take a bit of stress off and just to know that what I'm doing is like I'm trying to perfect something instead of just trying to win a match.

So I feel like I try to take that mindset into it, and slowly start implementing my game as I play more matches.

Q. It seemed like you singled out a fan after the match on court and had a somewhat protracted exchange. Who was it and what was the exchange?

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, well, I was going to throw my water bottles away and then he asked for a towel. I told him, I think we're not allowed to because of COVID. He wanted to take a picture, so I just told him to, like, there's a specific way to take pictures that, like -- I don't know. Yeah, basically we just took a picture.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I honestly haven't been on social media yet, so I haven't seen any recommendations. Maybe when I go on later today they'll have some.

That's interesting. Honestly, I can hear the fans more than I can hear my team, which is a bit weird. But, yeah, I think there are times when I'm really zoned in that I can't hear anyone at all. Normally, instead of hearing, I think I feel it more when they are cheering. Like there's this kind of aura that I feel.

Everybody. From my team more when I go on the side that they are on. Sounds kind of weird, but...

Yeah, I think for me I have just been really focusing on being able to serve well under pressure and also returning well. So I think it is really important just for me to keep that mentality of knowing that my serve is one of my biggest weapons and also trying to return well, because I feel like -- I don't know. I feel a lot of pressure when I play great returners, so it would be nice to put that pressure on other people, too.

Honestly, I haven't really thought about it. I feel like if the time comes where I have to, then I will, but for the meantime I feel like I'm taking all the precautions. Honestly, I don't know. I know that there is a lot of people taking it. So I guess I'll just see what happens.

Honestly, I think I'm the type of person that raises my

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

game to the person that I'm playing. So I can never really rate myself. I feel like today I was a bit slow, but I think that's because of the time that I was playing and also I didn't do anything yesterday, so I didn't really help myself that much there. But I think the fact that I'm still winning means that I can rate myself pretty high right now, but I think that has more to do with my mentality than any physical attribute.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports