

# Brisbane International

Monday, 1 January 2024

Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

## Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



N. OSAKA/T. Korpatsch

6-4, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Naomi, how did it feel to be out there today?

NAOMI OSAKA: Felt really good. Yeah, it felt really good. Felt very happy to be back. I don't know. I haven't played in Brisbane for I guess four years or whenever last time I was here.

Just happy to be back.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Would you prefer an easy 6-1, 6-1, or the hour and three quarters you were out there for?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, I would prefer what I played. I think maybe some of my decisions weren't the best. But I think it's better to have harder matches because it will train me for what's to come.

I know all the opponents I play aren't easy anyway, so it would be I don't want to say crazy, but very out there for me to think my first match would be a 6-1, 6-1.

**Q. You've practiced a lot as a mother, but did it feel different going out into a competitive match, everything else that comes with the crowds and everything, playing that game?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I wouldn't really say it feels differently. Well, that's a lie. I felt, I don't know, like a part of me felt like Shai was watching me. I wanted to do my best for her.

Also I guess like towards the end when I was signing autographs, I was more aware of kids. It made me, like, feel... I don't know. I see them differently now because now I'm a mom, too, and I can picture Shai being that age.

Yeah, I think while I'm playing, I'm aware of it in the sense that I want to be a good role model for my daughter. Other than that I think I'm pretty much trying to be the same old me.

**Q. What sort of things are you looking at in your own game at this stage in terms of getting a level?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, for me right now I guess stepping into the match or, like, looking back on the match now, honestly I'm very proud of myself. I feel like I played at a pretty good level. I think my opponent played really well, as well.

Honestly, all I can think of is, like, the consistent nerves that I had. So just getting through that really tough match and hopefully building on it. I think my next match will be a really good test on that. Wim told me who I was playing. I don't know why he did that, like, before my first match.

Yeah, I've played her a couple of times. She's such a tough opponent. She's very different from the match that I played just now, so... Very interested to see what happens.

**Q. A lot has been made of your comeback through the lens of yourself, where you're going to be at mentally. Externally, the changes of the tour, the changing landscape since your absence, where now there's this group of high-level women that are contending for all the big tournaments, which is different from when you were at the top. Does it feel different coming back now versus a couple years ago?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, I feel like the tour's always had really quality women. I've always felt a lot of respect for Barty. When I was playing, she was, like, No. 1 and everything. I mean, Pliskova was there, too. There's always a really good crop of people at the top playing really well.

I mean, now it's not much different. I feel like they were there when I was there, as well. They just rose their game. I think they've learned themselves a lot more, too. It's been really interesting to see them, I guess, find themselves in a way.

**Q. You said after the game that you sort of felt in the past when you'd been here you hadn't returned the love you sort of received. You wanted to change that this time. Can you elaborate more on what is so different now?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think I maybe phrased that wrong. I meant like since French Open I feel like I closed myself off a lot. I don't know. I don't think that was quite fair. I just want to, like, when people give me positivity and joy, I feel like it's fair to return it, especially when I feel it in such an abundance.

That's what I meant. I didn't mean Brisbane in particular, no.

**Q. You were able to chat to your team there between sets. That rule has come in since you've been away. Is that something that will be an advantage for you? Do you think you'll do it much?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, probably not. Like, I was just really nervous so I wanted to see if talking would help. I realize I'm the kind of player that really needs to focus a lot because my mind does wander quite often. I probably won't do that again unless it's, like, really close, maybe in the third set. I don't even know if that's allowed, though. They said it was only the bathroom break or a medical timeout.

Yeah, I think I'm just going to focus on myself and potentially never do that again (smiling).

**Q. In an individual sport you have to focus on yourself intently almost all the time. What's it like now having to shift your focus to another human being? How has that affected you as a player?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, it's a big change overnight, I would say. For me, I love it a lot because, I don't know, in a way I would say she's helped me grow up so much so quickly. I think it would relate to my tennis in a way that off the court I'm more aware of people and I appreciate them a lot more - even my opponents and everything.

I think today I looked at my box a bit too much, which isn't really like me. I was panicking a little because I was so nervous. But, yeah, I think on the court it's just helping me be strong and staying in the moment more.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: So I think today I served pretty well. My percentage is maybe not that high. I think, honestly, she returned pretty well towards the end of the second set. That kind of threw me off a little bit. But I think I served well when I could. I also think I hit some pretty good forehands, which I guess is kind of my signature anyways. It was nice to feel the contact off the racquet.

I guess what I didn't do well? Honestly, I can't really categorize it as not doing well. I just feel like I was nervous so I wasn't able to close out points the way I

wanted to. I think I have to expect that from the first match of the year.

**Q. Today is New Year's Day, can you talk about the biggest goal of this year?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, when I did an interview with Shuzo, I said some pretty big goals. I still have them in my heart, of course. I want to do well in Paris.

But I think for me, I just know, like, it's one match at a time. I'm here right now, so I want to do well here. At the end of it all, I think if anything goes wrong, I know I can count on myself to have a really good end of the year, like towards the US Open. I'm a match person. I built my schedule around having as many matches as I can.

**Q. During your match today, you looked so calm, mentally calm. Could you tell me birth of your daughter influenced your mental strengths or not?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, yeah, I mean, I think definitely she has influenced me a lot. She's taught me to be a lot more patient. But if anything, I guess giving birth, too, was the most painful thing that I'd ever experienced. I just thought, like, nothing could be worse than this.

Also, I just thought in my head I've trained almost immediately after giving birth to be in this very spot right now. I owe it to myself to try as hard as I can.

I don't think I was very calm. I thought I was a little panicked. I guess I'm a good actor because I was trying to fake it.

Yeah, I don't know, I just wanted to see what I could do. I think I'm very happy to have won this match. I'm just really looking forward to my next one.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports