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Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



K. PLISKOVA/N. Osaka

3-6, 7-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Naomi, that was a great match from both of you guys. Can you just talk through your performance and your thoughts on your week.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, honestly I knew that she was going to play really well, and whenever I play her, it's always three sets. The week is definitely shorter than I wanted it to be, but overall I think it was a great match, and I had a lot of fun.

I saw the stats after, and my break points could have been better. But I think other than that, we both played really well. So hopefully she says the same thing.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. As you said, the break points are probably the only thing that could have been better. Did you always expect coming back that, I guess, finding that killer instinct may take a bit of time to build back into? And what is sort of the process between now and the Aussie Open for you to be able to rediscover that in time to really make an impression at the slam?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, it's kind of tough because she has such a great serve. I'm not really sure if I can be too hard on myself, if that makes sense.

I knew going into the match, we had stats on where she serves specifically, but then she changed it up on me. So I don't know. I feel like I'm pretty good where I am right now. Even the last time I played her, I think I played better today. Well, score-wise at least.

I feel like, honestly, I think I'm pretty good. Like, the court is just really... It's her court, you know what I mean? I guess I'll see what happens in Melbourne.

Q. When we spoke at the weekend I asked you whether you thought the defeats might hurt a little bit less now that you're a mom and there's that extra perspective. I know it's very early days, but do you feel any different after this defeat?

NAOMI OSAKA: I do feel different. I mean, of course I feel sad, but the sadness is me being, like, Aww, I wish I could have done better, because I know I'm spending so much time away from her, so I want it to be worth it somehow. Also, I feel like it fueled me a lot to do better.

I think I did do really well this match. It does sting a little bit less because I know that I literally gave everything that I could.

Yeah, it's like a two-way type of thing.

Q. I know it's very, very early in the comeback, you could say, but what have you learned about yourself in the last couple of weeks and in this last couple of days in particular with your first couple of matches back?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think I learned that while I had to relearn myself a lot, and I just relearned that - this is my opinion - but I think I have a lot of heart. I think when I'm playing and I'm at my best, I'm just really putting my entire soul into every point.

So, I don't know, it was fun to play that and rediscover that feeling again.

Q. You posted a photo on Instagram after your first win the other day, and it was a couple of outtakes, but I think there was one on there of a baby looking at a screen. Was that Shai?

NAOMI OSAKA: That was not Shai. Listen, if I posted Shai, you would know it was Shai.

Q. I just wanted to confirm that because I think there would be a lot of people out there wondering. You're more than entirely welcome to keep your private life private, of course. When you talk about role models and things like that and especially being a role model for Shai, I think I've noticed a lot more this week, as you mentioned the other day, you're embracing the audience and the crowd a lot more. You're getting the selfies. Even today when you did lose the match, you gave the crowd such a big wave. When I spoke to you the other day, you said winning was like a relief. You weren't happy to win per se in the later stages before your comeback. Do you feel like you've definitely achieved that this week so far?



NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I think for me even stepping on the court is a personal win because a couple of weeks ago I was even doubting if I could play with everyone.

So I guess these two matches that I've had kind of prove to me that I am doing okay, and the year is just going to get better for me.

Even though it's super disappointing today, I know that if I keep training and if I keep putting in the work, then I'll eventually get to where I want to be.

Q. Just with the handful of times out there as well, even when a point went against you, you could be seen smiling and laughing to yourself. There's one where it looked like the ball was going long and you left it. It still hit the line. Do you feel particularly different when you are out there compared to when you did go away? If so, how does that different mindset play into your prospects when you get down to Melbourne?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think I'm enjoying myself a lot more, and I also realize there's a lot of things that aren't in my control. Maybe the ball that was in, I could have hit that. Other than that, I feel more aware that I'm playing the best players in the world. Both of us have an opportunity to win.

I also just think I've trained so hard after giving birth that I need to enjoy these moments, and I also think in a way watching Sharapova, Serena retiring, I know that the tennis lifespan isn't that long, so I should enjoy it while I can.

Q. This is not tennis question, but huge earthquake and tsunami hit Japan two days ago. Could you give a comment on that?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think for me it's really devastating. I didn't hear about it until a night or so ago just because I feel a little disconnected from the news. I think Wim is the one that told me.

It's really rough to hear. I feel like earthquakes happen a lot in Japan. I've been there and I've felt it, but never the severe ones.

My immediate thing was checking on my ojichan and everyone there and just making sure everyone is okay. But I know the situation is still kind of ongoing, so I hope everyone is okay, yeah.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

NAOMI OSAKA: My mom calls him and sometimes I call him, but the moments that I call him he won't pick up and

then he'll call me back at, like, 2:30 in the morning, so my mom gets mad to him about it. But yeah...

Q. Back to the tennis question. Today you are so respectful to the opponent. I watched even you applauded to her nice play. Could you explain why you did so?

NAOMI OSAKA: Because it was a nice play (laughing). I don't know. I feel like for me, I'm aware of the impact of my ball. I feel like I hit pretty hard, so if anyone is able to hit a winner or anything off of that, I think it takes a lot of effort and talent. Also, she used to be No. 1. I guess we both were.

I don't know. I respect a lot if you can hit a winner off that, and I feel like I can't really do too much about it. I can't be too hard on myself. So, yeah, it was a nice play.

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