

United Cup

Thursday, 1 January 2026

Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Team Japan

Captain Go Soeda

Yasutaka Uchiyama

Naomi Osaka

Shintaro Mochizuki

Nao Hibino

Press Conference



NAOMI OSAKA: I think for me, just it being such a good team atmosphere. I've always kind of watched United Cup on the TV. I've wanted to play for a long time. So just to have that opportunity to be able to come here, and I've been to Perth once before when it was the Hopman Cup. Yeah, I would just say I really enjoy team atmospheres.

Q. Talking about the team aspect, starting with the team event, does it make it easier transitioning to the season where the rest of the way you're playing individual competitions?

SHINTARO MOCHIZUKI: I love team events. We don't usually play team events in the season. I like it. Especially like Davis Cup, United Cup, I would love to play in the future many times. Hopefully I get the chance to play a lot of times, yeah.

Q. Naomi, you get to play Emma Raducanu, former Grand Slam champion. What are you excited about?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think for me, that's another important part of playing United Cup. Just, like, being able to play the best players in the world straight off the bat, which I think is a privilege.

For me, I really enjoy matches like that. I enjoy playing in really big arenas. I just feel like it's going to be really fun.

Q. Naomi, you mentioned you prioritize spending time with your daughter. In recent years in Australian sport, there's been a bit of a revolution in terms of the empowerment of female athletes, particularly those who manage parenthood, being a mother, alongside their sporting career. I want to know how have you felt parenthood has evolved your career or enriched it?

NAOMI OSAKA: I would say it's evolved my career just by shifting my mindset a lot. If you knew me before, you would know that for me, I would take everything so seriously. I would say my losses and my wins defined how I, I guess, viewed my worth as a person.

Now I think for me, I'm just taking it every day is like a new opportunity to do better, but at the same time, I know that my only role, or my biggest role, isn't a tennis player. It's to be a mom to my daughter.

I don't know, I'm really happy that I was able to learn that. I'm just excited to see what more I can learn from her.

THE MODERATOR: Will you give your thoughts heading into the first matches tomorrow and playing United Cup?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, for me, I think it's my first United Cup, so I'm really excited and happy to be here with such an amazing team. Yeah, I'm just looking forward to our first match.

SHINTARO MOCHIZUKI: I'm looking forward to it because it's a wonderful start for the season. I've never played this event before, so I'm excited and looking for tomorrow.

GO SOEDA: This is my first United Cup, so first of all, I have to be fun, and then let's see (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: We'll go into questions.

Q. Naomi, you had sort of a short season, let's say, at the end. The two months off, how have you spent that? How is your form at the moment?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I think for me, I prioritized spending a lot of time with my daughter, so I was really glad that I was able to do that. Of course, recover, because I do think the season was really long, even though I didn't play the entire thing.

Yeah, I think my form right now hopefully is good. I guess I'll see what happens in the matches that I have to play, but overall I'm pretty happy with how my year shaped up. I'm excited for this, I guess, upcoming year, too.

Q. Naomi, I know originally you were scheduled to play in Auckland, but you came here. Aside from the fact that it's a 250 to a 500, what else attracted you to play here at United Cup?

Q. Is it quite hard at times to balance up your priorities? How do you weigh that balance between being a mother and also trying to get back into winning another Grand Slam?

NAOMI OSAKA: I would say it's definitely really tough. This off-season was quite difficult for me, as well, just because you try to be there for her all the time, and obviously there are moments where you have to practice or you have to do something. It is really difficult.

I hope that I'm managing it or I'm juggling it well. I also hope there's going to come a time that she understands why I did the things that I did.

Q. Shintaro, the opportunity to play with Naomi, what does that mean to you? Has she been an inspiration to you during your career?

SHINTARO MOCHIZUKI: Very nervous (smiling). It was actually, like, couple days ago, maybe yesterday, is the first time I spoke with her. I saw her a couple times in the tournament, but I didn't get a chance to talk to her. I was very nervous at the beginning.

I think it's getting better. Hopefully I can get close more and more. If I get to play doubles with her, it would be great. I mean, I don't know what it's going to be like, how it's going to be, but I just want to enjoy the time here in Perth with the team, with the whole team.

Yeah, I'm very excited.

Q. Is there a moment of Naomi's career that is one of your favorites? Maybe a slam win?

SHINTARO MOCHIZUKI: Yes, I mean, I watched some finals when she won slams. I mean, all the Japanese watched it, I think. It's a privilege to be with her.

Q. What are you hoping to get out of this week? Obviously playing doubles. Looking forward to playing on a big stage?

YASUTAKA UCHIYAMA: I'm always fun to play a team match. I was so excited to play the United Cup. Also, I have to support all the team. If I have a chance to play doubles, I have to be really 100% on the court.

The first is to enjoy the whole week with the team and the tournament.

Q. Captain, it's not an easy group. You're in with Great Britain and Greece. How do you think the team's chances are looking?

GO SOEDA: Of course, yes, we have a chance. Every match, I think it's going to be tough match, but we have a

chance. Let's see.

Yeah, we have a good team, so we can win.

Q. Naomi, on you and your daughter, when you're going into these tournaments, does it give you more incentive to win as a mom, or is it just the ordinary sort of tournament mentality?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think, I mean, obviously I do think about that in the back of my mind. There are so many incredible moms on tour. We were just on the court, and Bencic had her daughter there. I thought that was really, really cute, and it made me think of my daughter, as well.

I think I've kind of passed that point, and now I'm kind of just going towards my next goal, which is obviously to do well in Australia. Then obviously we have the Grand Slam coming up, so yeah.

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