

# Australian Open

Tuesday, 16 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

## Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



C. GARCIA/N. Osaka

6-4, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Naomi, tough battle today, but a great fight against a great opponent. Can you give us your thoughts on the match today and the atmosphere out there on Rod Laver.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I thought it was a really good match. For me, I felt like I did the best that I could possibly do. It was just really nice to be on Rod Laver again, hear the audience, how much they interacted with the match. That was fun.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. After the Pliskova match you said if only 10% of those returns landed in, maybe it was a different result. Was there a sense of a similar situation tonight?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yes and no. For some reason, like I felt like the Pliskova match, I definitely had more break points, and I don't think I had one in this match.

I also just feel like, of course the returns were really important, but I think I could have done a little bit more - this is my opinion - from, like, baseline shots. I felt like I was constantly on my back foot and really hesitant. I think it might be because I haven't played matches in a while. I was a little bit overthinking in my head where to go.

Yeah, of course, I think that's something that will come in time. But right now it kind of sucks a little.

**Q. You talked about walking back out on Rod Laver. What were the memories that came back to you? What were you thinking about?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I have this ritual of tapping my name, so I did that while I walked out (smiling).

Yeah, it was really cool. I remember watching it on TV last year. I was really grateful to walk on the court. I was grateful they put me on that court in the first place.

Yeah, just really fun. I was watching de Minaur play before that. I guess watching as much tennis as I can.

**Q. Are you able to recognize in this match and the Pliskova match, you played two of the best servers in tennis right now who had good serving days against you? Does that make it easier?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yes and no. Like, of course I have to tell myself, Hey, like six months ago you were pregnant, stuff like that. Of course, like, there's a voice in my head that is, Who are you to think you can come back and immediately start winning matches?

I don't know. I kind of always expect myself to stand a chance anyways. So I guess just being nicer to myself is like a key thing that I learned in my time away.

But it is really tough to I guess play a good server and not make too many returns.

**Q. You mentioned her quality. Can you talk a little bit more about her serve. What is more impressive, the first serve or the second serve? What is difficult to read in her serve?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Hmm... What is difficult to read in her serve?

I mean, I don't want to say I grew up watching her. We were in the WTA Rising Stars together. She's always had the complete package. I think her serve is part of that package.

I think when I'm playing her, I'm aware of patterns that she likes to do. Sometimes for me randomly she'll serve a completely different way or a completely different speed. Sometimes in ways I wasn't expecting it. That's why in the second set I backed up a little bit on the second serve.

I'm also not, like, right now the best returner. Maybe if she plays a great returner, you might want to ask them.

**Q. How excited did the last couple weeks get you to continue on this process, or did it not get you that excited, or make you feel like there's a lot of work ahead?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Like Brisbane and stuff?

**Q. The experience of these last couple weeks, I mean, it's a big task coming back, a lot of work. As you sit here now, it's hard to put it all in perspective so quickly. I guess I'm curious, as you experienced it, what are the emotions you leave here with?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, these past couple weeks I think, for me, I'm very grateful for them. I have a team that's really amazing and I've made a lot of different memories with them in Australia. Of course, I don't regret anything.

I think I've learned a lot during this trip, both on the court and off the court. Also I think I just played some really good people. Like, it's a little unfortunate. I wish I could have maybe played United Cup or played something where I'm not immediately out if I don't win a match.

Yeah, I think I just have to see how the rest of my season goes. I'm a little sad 'cause this outfit's really cool and you won't see it again (laughter). That's why I had to wear it in here.

**Q. Do you feel that players maybe play up against you? When they see you, they bring their best?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I've always felt that. I kind of, like, think that comes with the territory. I don't know. Wim always shows me his PowerPoint presentations about the opponent. When I get on the court, they serve faster or they hit harder and stuff. I kind of feel like they might have to. You know what I mean?

I always expect that. I don't know. It's a little frustrating sometimes (smiling).

**Q. You talked about wanting to play a fuller schedule this year. Can you share what your next few months look like in terms of what tournaments you're going to play?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, Wim just talked to me about playing a lot more matches. I don't know if he wants to add stuff. I'm definitely thinking of playing Dubai, Indian Wells, Miami, Charleston, then probably like a full clay season.

THE MODERATOR: We'll switch to a few questions in Japanese.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I think I still feel like a bit disappointed. I don't know if I'm disappointed in myself. I don't think that's possible because I really feel like I couldn't have done more with the circumstances. I did

feel nervous, but I felt like I kept telling myself to be positive. I thought I kept doing better as the match went on.

So, yeah, I'm not too happy right now, but I think I can learn from the progress. You know what? Let me just shut up, yeah.

Yeah, I think that's a really tough question. It's weird because I felt like when I was in L.A. training, I was really worried that I wasn't going to be able to keep up with any of the girls that I played in my matches. Coming here and I guess playing three tough matches, I feel positive that I'm able to play, I'm at least able to challenge them. You know what I mean?

The competitive in me is really frustrated that I'm not winning these matches, of course. So I wouldn't say, like, this comeback is how I thought because I'm delusional enough to think I could have won the tournament. I think my delusion is what allows me to win the tournaments (smiling).

Yeah, I think I just have to keep living day by day and training hard and playing a lot more matches, and hopefully my dreams will come true.

Yeah, I mean, I talk to and I think about Shai a lot. Before my match, I got sent a video of her. She wasn't obviously saying good luck, but I got a video of someone saying, Shai says good luck. It was really cute. It made me happy and motivated, but at the same time a little frustrated because I felt like I should do better with the time I had away from her.

Yeah, hopefully I get there one day, though.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports