

National Bank Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



N. OSAKA/O. JABEUR

6-3, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Who would like the first question for Naomi?

Q. Ons has been one of the best players in the world over the past few years. How much did you miss competing against the best of the best in the sport and kind of being in that whole competitive aspect?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I missed it a lot, that's kind of the reason why I came back. I think, you know, for me, where I'm at right now it gives me a really good test to see where my weapons lay against theirs, so I was kind of excited to play against her in the first round.

Q. Curious, in this match, did you feel like after four months of maybe sometimes having to think a lot in terms of the clay and the grass how you wanted to play your game, was this just an autopilot kind of feeling when you played it?

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, a little, yeah. I think for me I've had so many matches on hard court under my belt, and I learned a lot from my last match on hard, which was against Garcia in Miami. It was a little bit of a long time coming, but I'm really glad to be back on hard and I think, I don't know, even the way that I return now I took from clay, so I hope that I can keep implementing things that I've learned over the months.

Q. You told us the other day in press that when you first touched foot on hard court it was like Sailor Moon transforming. I'm wondering, what's your favorite thing about playing on this surface, and is there anything that you don't like about playing on hard courts?

NAOMI OSAKA: I would never attack my treasured hard court (laughing). I would say my favorite thing about hard court, I don't know, it's fast, but it's not too fast. Like, I feel like on grass it's somehow a little bit reactive, and I

obviously couldn't get used to that quick enough, but on hard it kind of gives me at least a second to, I guess, build up the point. I also feel like that might also be the reason why I did better on clay as opposed to grass, just because I do quite like building the point, so...

Q. To follow-up on that, you mentioned the Garcia match in Miami as your last hard-court match. How much better do you feel as a player in your comeback now compared to then on the hard court?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think during those, like the first few tournaments, I was kind of relying on, like, my talent and I guess my, like what I knew until that point, but tennis is evolving and everyone gets better. I really wanted to watch the players and learn from them. I was telling you guys last time, but I'm really trying to, like, do the squeaky feet like Iga, and I think I did it quite well today, so thankfully that's working out.

Honestly, I didn't know the score today until I asked Wim, because I was trying to be really focused in the match, but I don't feel like I could have this scoreline with Ons before, so I'm really glad that it seems like I'm learning a little bit throughout the years.

Q. Just back to Ons, because you played against her before, wondering if you can talk about what you see in her as a competitor and also as a person, you know, knowing her, how can you describe her in general?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I think she's the Minister of Happiness, right? (Smiling) I think she's the friendliest, nicest player. I can't say enough good things about her. She's been that way since I was like 16, 17, however old I was when we first met.

I think, as a competitor, it's kind of intimidating, because she's, like, when I saw her at the net, she wasn't smiling, so it threw me off just because she smiles all the time and I was like, Whoa, like, Oh, we're here now.

Yeah, I think, you know, obviously she's one of the best players in the world, and she got that way for a reason because she is a killer and she is competitive, so it's kind of cool to see.



Q. You were kind enough to sign a lot of autographs and take a lot of selfies with the fans for I guess 20, 25 minutes after you won on the center court. I'm curious, how much do you think about kind of the representational aspect for you when it comes to all of these little Black boys and girls and Asian boys and girls who come and watch you play and really see themselves in the success that you've had on the court.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I think for me, representation is really important. I've thought that way since I was younger. I know I wouldn't be here without my role models, Serena and Venus. Just to, I guess, blaze that path for other kids is really cool.

I was talking with someone about this the other day, but since becoming a mom I think the word "role model" has always been heavy to me, but now it's like I'm looking at kids looking at me and saying that I'm their favorite player, and knowing that they have a parent behind them that's kind of trusting me with that is really huge. If I think about shy, like, having a poster of a player, then I'm going to like do a lot of research on that person, so I really feel the trust and I think it definitely means a lot to me, so I try to pay it back.

Q. I know you opened up a production company a couple years ago as well, so when you're thinking about the kind of work you're doing off the court as well what kind of stories are you looking to tell and what was kind of the impetus to be involved in that creative field as well?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think for me, I've been really fortunate to, I guess, come from so many different cultures, heritages. I think sometimes I see the world a little bit differently. I love telling stories. I love watching movies. I think that that viewpoint is something that needs to come across sometimes. I guess that's why the production company was started. I love to tell stories that aren't being told yet.

I come from a Japanese mother and a Haitian father and I grew up in America, so there's so many different things that I love to tap into. Currently we have a lot in the works, so I hope you watch or read them when they come out.

Q. Can you explain or can you describe what it felt like when you realized that you were, that you had become a role model and an advocate for new moms, for working moms, or for anyone who had ever struggled with body image issues?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think, well, today while I was signing

autographs a mom talked to me, and she said that she was having a tough time, and something that I said on court really helped her out. For me it's definitely an honor. I don't know, I still feel like I'm figuring myself out, so I'm always a little shocked when someone says that something that I've said or done has helped them out, but I really treasure that a lot. I think we're all just trying to get through it, and we're all just trying to find the best way that we know how and, yeah, it's a really big honor for me.

Q. A few months ago you tweeted something about being a mom, and how, something about how your body looks, it doesn't matter, like, it was really succinct and it blew up. I think there was something like 200,000 likes after about 36 hours, something like that. I don't know if you remember that.

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, when I type something I just run away from the app after (laughing). I try not to look. You know, I think there's so much stress on moms to, like, bounce back or, like, get back to something.

I feel like it's a beautiful, magical thing that you've created a life inside of you, and you almost don't even really get to treasure that moment. I think for me, I don't know, I feel like giving birth is, it's normalized, and almost every, like, mom that I know has had a really difficult pregnancy and labor, so I wish that women could see how strong they are, but also not feel, like, too many expectations at the same time to, I guess, look a certain way or be a certain way.

Q. You talked about trying to improve your movement and scouting Iga, but you've also brought on a ballet dancer on your team. How has that kind of helped to improve your movement?

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, yeah, I think that Simone's helped my movement a lot. She's also kind of my mental coach. I said kind of, but she actually is my mental coach.

Yeah, honestly, I haven't gotten injured this entire time, and I want to, like, you know, thank her for that, her and Flo. I've been doing ballet lessons with her, so I told her one of my goals is to do the really famous, like Clijsters and Serena, like, split forehand, so hopefully maybe in the next couple of months, if you see it on court, just know we've been working very hard on it.

Q. It's so awesome that you went to both sides and actually did autographs. I have a question from a young fan, and she asks, like, what does it feel like playing tennis, and what does it feel like to win?

NAOMI OSAKA: What does it feel like to play?



Q. Yeah, she's eight years old and she really wanted to know what it feels like to play and win.

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, for me it feels like a lot of hard work has paid off, and it feels like there's been definitely a lot of sacrifice. She's eight, so let me choose a simpler answer (smiling). It feels like ... do you care about hard work when you're eight? Yeah, hard work's paid off and it feels like, you know, you're taking one step, one step into the journey of like becoming a professional tennis player, yeah.

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