

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I know you played in your formative years growing up on the public courts in Pembroke Pines. Can you talk a little bit about those experiences and how it may have shaped your game and how much you may love the Miami Open accordingly.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, of course, I always have really fond memories whenever I came back to Florida and play this tournament. I think for me playing on those public courts with my sister, it shaped me in the way that I was very tolerant just because we would play for hours on end.

Yeah, I don't know, I played on these courts right next to an airport. So, I don't know, I guess I got used to loud noise, too, maybe. But, yeah, it was really fun times. I always have a lot of memories whenever I come back here.

Q. I was wondering, I read your article in the Wall Street Journal, I know the hiatus forced you off the court, not traveling. You said it gave you time for reflection. Can you talk about your approach based on that? Have you changed your approach to tennis, competing? If so, in what ways?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think for me, I changed my approach in just talking to my team more. For me, I would say the biggest stress is just me thinking about disappointing my team with my result. Like, if I happen to lose, I wouldn't feel sad for myself, I would feel sad for the people that travel with me, that go with me through everything, through practices and stuff like that. Just reflecting on that, understanding that I'm not perfect, I'm not going to win every match, but it's my effort level that matters.

Tennis-wise, that's what I learned.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about what it's been like to play with limited fans or no fans, and what you're expecting from the ambience here? The Miami Open is always a tournament that has a lot of energy and noise, quite frankly. What are you expecting? They are going to have about 800 to 1,000 fans. What are

you expecting from the atmosphere here?

NAOMI OSAKA: I'm not too sure. For me, I've only played about four tournaments since everything started, two of them without fans at all, the other two in Australia where there were fans, but then there was a period that there wasn't fans.

I feel right now I'm very adjustable. I'm just going to go with whatever, like wherever the wind takes me sort of deal.

Q. Mari recently announced that she's retired from tennis. She's been with you kind of the whole time through your career. How did you take that, if you helped her make the decision at all?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, for me, I've always felt like it's a bit weird, but I'm only good at one thing, and that's tennis. I sort of chased this relentlessly.

For her, I felt like she was always a bit too nice. Like I'm the mean sister, she's the nice sister. There were always situations where I thought she was really nice. There are things she's done that I thought to myself, if an opponent cheats, she wouldn't cheat back, that sort of thing.

But, yeah, for me, I feel like she's really happy where she is right now. That's my biggest thing, just for my family to be happy, for me to be able to be in the position to help her maybe move towards another dream that she has, so yeah.

Q. Thus far there has been only one repeat winner on the WTA Tour this year through the first 13 tournaments. What are your thoughts on the depth of the current WTA and women's tennis? Are you surprised or not surprised by this?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I'm not really surprised by it at all. I feel like everybody that you see doing well right now, you kind of see it coming. For example, like Brady, I could see that she was going to do well, sort of start going deeper in the draws. Muguruza, like she's won two Grand Slams. It's not very surprising at all.



I feel like the level of women's tennis has really risen. Everyone is really strong. Everyone has the capability of winning matches. Yeah, it might not look like it from the outside, like outside people might say it's really random and whatever. But I think just everyone is so strong so everyone has a chance to win.

Q. First of all, from the outside it does look like there's a lot of depth in women's tennis. Don't worry about that. Having said that, you mentioned before that you only played like four times since tennis came back. Is this what we should expect of you through this year? Is this how you're approaching the year, really sort of pick your spots, play where you can, stay healthy? Do you expect once the clay court season picks up that you'll have a more 'normal schedule'?

NAOMI OSAKA: Well, for me, I'm not really sure what a normal schedule is. I've never thought of myself to be the type of player that would play week in and week out.

I personally get homesick quite often. It makes me kind of sad sometimes. So, yeah, I'd love to just travel somewhere and just be really focused on that tournament. For me, that is something that I've learned works for me. Hopefully it will work for me this time in Europe because my results there haven't been that great.

Yeah, I feel like every year I'm on tour, I learn more about myself, what type of schedule I like to play.

Q. This is the first time we've seen you since Australia. What have you been up to basically for the last few weeks? You talked about not sort of playing too regularly. We've seen other players talk about the fatigue of being in a bubble week-to-week. Do you think playing more sparingly helps you deal with that better, that you won't suffer in the same way?

NAOMI OSAKA: So what I've been up to, I've basically been training, yeah, training and getting stuff done I guess.

For me, I'm not really sure I can comment on the bubble situation because I haven't really played as many bubble tournaments as other players. But I do know, yeah, it does feel a bit more stressful. You feel, of course, limited.

One of the perks of being a tennis player is being able to travel and see things. You're not able to see the things and explore the areas you'd love to. But, of course, that's I guess a rule of being where you are. I'm not really complaining about it at all.

I would say definitely you sort of have to go into the tournaments in a different mindset than before.

Q. It's been a year that this whole world is living in this kind of pandemic viewpoint. Away from the tennis, what do you think you've learned the most about yourself in this whole scenario?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think what I've learned most about myself, I think I worry about things that aren't as important as I make them seem. Just dialing down on that, trying to be more aware of, I don't know, my thoughts and my actions.

For me, I feel like there's a lot of things that I do half heartedly. I'd love to put more - how do I explain? Like I'd love to be conscious of every action that I do and how it would affect the people around me.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I would still say definitely that's my best win just because it's a special moment to be losing to someone for, like, your whole childhood and then get to beat them, yeah.

Yeah, I mean, for me, my sister, she's the reason why I started playing tennis. Of course, it was a sad moment for our entire family. But it's something that you could kind of feel coming. She's just so good at so many different things. For me, I feel like anything that makes her happy basically.

For me, I actually don't feel any pressure. It's not like I'm defending here. I've never even made second week here before. I feel more fun, like excitement. I want to see how well I can do. I have so many really good memories here as a kid, not particularly this location. When I was a kid, I went to Key Biscayne.

Yeah, for me, it's just more exciting. I'll get to see my mom and dad, so there's that.

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