

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



N. OSAKA/A. Tomljanovic

7-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What are you most proud of getting back on court, first match since the Australian Open?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I would say what I'm most proud of today, just being able to handle my nerves. I guess be able to finish it in two sets.

I think the conditions here are very different from Australia and from LA where I was practicing before I came here. Just being able to adjust quickly and learn throughout the match.

Q. I have been meaning to ask you, do you have a lot of input with your court designs that you wear for Nike? I notice that they stand out tournament after tournament a little bit different than what a lot of the others are wearing, always colorful. I was just curious how much of an input you have in the design process.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I take calls with them. For me it's some of the most fun calls that I have.

But, yeah, I would say I'm able to have input, which for me is something that is really fun. I don't know. But I also trust them a lot, too.

Q. Even though you have been training in LA, you have had so many years that you trained here in South Florida. How does that help you? Is there like body memory with the heat and the humidity? Do you all of a sudden feel like you're back on the courts of Broward when you're in the middle of the day sweltering heat here? Do you feel that helps you, gives you a little bit of an edge over other players like today?

NAOMI OSAKA: Well, interestingly, I remember hitting at Evert and Ajla was also practicing there, so it was funny. Today I was thinking she's probably the one person that

doesn't mind the heat like me.

So I didn't really think it was a factor today. But, yeah, I feel like my body has been able to adjust to the heat quite well. I actually really like sweating in really hot conditions where you feel like you're really pushing yourself as an athlete.

Of course maybe my body has memory of that when I was a kid and growing up here, but I think all in all, it's sort of more the mindset.

Q. Welcome back to Miami. A lot of great moments today, but there was one shot that us weekend hackers could identify with, that serve in the last game. Was the sun the problem with that or what happened?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, it was actually kind of funny when I got past my frustration. The sun was like on top of a cloud and it gave off this really weird glare effect.

It was kind of my fault for being stubborn and not trying to catch my toss and wait it out. But, yeah, I just tried to go for it, and unfortunately that was the result.

Q. You have had mixed results here over the years. Is there a pattern there? Do you file it away as disappointing historically, or do you think this year is going to be different? What are your thoughts about that part of it?

NAOMI OSAKA: Well, I feel like all of my results, there is always a story behind them. One year when I played here it was after I won Indian Wells and I was really like mentally fatigued.

The next year I wasn't doing so well on the hard courts, so it was like back-to-back losses. I don't really think it's too much you can read into them. But I always feel like there is always a reason why I haven't done well here, and hopefully I'm able to do well this time.

Q. This is all part and parcel of life in the world at the moment, virtual press conferences and virtual meetings, et cetera. What are your thoughts? How have you found them? I know you're obviously used



to them now. It's been going on for seven months. But what are your thoughts? Do you like it? Do you dislike it? Would you rather it be the other way, a mixture? What are your thoughts?

NAOMI OSAKA: For me, I find it a bit interesting. I feel like I have had to adapt to it, but, hmm, I feel like it's more efficient, like I find the press conferences to be a bit shorter. I'm not sure if it's because there is no human interaction, but I also find myself being kind of straightforward in my answers and not really telling jokes anymore because I can't read a screen. Like if you guys were here, I could read your expressions and stuff, but I can't really read what's going on in the screen. So, yeah.

Q. Did you like the mixture aspect that we had here in Australia, in Melbourne, where you did have people in the room but there was also the virtual questions coming in?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I thought that was pretty nice for me. I feel like -- I don't know. I actually really like all of you guys, so it's kind of like a reunion every time I go to a tournament. So I was a bit sad to see some of the people I was hoping to see in real life on the screen in Australia. But, yeah, it's nice to see everyone in person.

Q. A picture of Marcus Rashford went viral yesterday on social media. He was wearing a hat that had your logo, the NO on the hat. So he may be a fan of yours. How does it feel for you to be such a global icon right now even among footballers? Do you think your work off the court for the Black Lives Matter movement, all of that has contributed to that, to you becoming such a huge, where even footballers from other countries are fans of yours?

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, I can't really answer that. I feel like you might be able to answer that question more than me, because for me I feel like I'm living my life so I can't really observe it from an outside point of view.

I kind of think that I'm doing like my daily things. But, yeah, it was really cool to see him wearing the beanie, because I have never really seen a famous athlete wear my Nike stuff before. So it was really, really -- actually, it was a really big honor for me, and I thanked him and stuff. So, yeah, I was super happy.

Q. I know that you are from South Florida. Is it any different for you walking on the court here at the Miami Open than it is anywhere else?

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I think it's a bit weird because I felt a lot of like nostalgia when it was in Key Biscayne, just

because that's where I grew up like going and watching the tournament itself.

But I still feel like even here when I step on the court I have a lot of like feelings that I want to do well, and I always get like warm feelings from the fans. Yeah, definitely it sort of feels like it gives me power, yeah.

Q. You have obviously been super successful lately on the court, that's obvious, but also in the business side of things, your brand has become so large and you have just been crushing it in that sense. Is that something you enjoy doing, taking calls with brands, your agent and manager, to build that? Does it kind of seem like a hassle? I know it's different for different players.

NAOMI OSAKA: I would say for me I enjoy it for the most part, though when I'm at a tennis tournament I don't really take calls or anything. I try to focus on, you know, my matches and stuff.

But for me, I would say I do enjoy interacting with like different brands. It's sort of educational in a way, because it really gives me like a firsthand look at how everything operates in everything that's not tennis. So, yeah.

Q. On the point of brands, somebody like Serena would be a brand. Roger Federer is a brand. Serena in fact when I asked her about this said, "And I'm a good brand," about herself. Do you consider yourself a brand when you think that Nike as an example don't allow other products to be put on their clothing? Li Na was an exception for Nike on that. You appear to be another exception on that score. So how do you feel about yourself on that aspect? Do you consider yourself to be a brand?

NAOMI OSAKA: Not necessarily if you put it like that. I feel like there are some things that I do in a sense of like I want to like cherish my time and like who I align myself with in a way.

But I don't really see myself as a brand. I just see myself as a person that has a lot of really good opportunities, and I just want to be able to pick and choose what I think is going to really stay with me in the future.

Q. I'm just curious, when you kind of have these long breaks, a little bit of a break after the Australian Open and you jump back into competition, how different does that first match typically feel for you? Is it like riding a bike and everything, it takes a little while but things feel familiar and click back? Or does it take you still time in your first tournament back to find it?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, for me, I would say it still takes me time. I think like today I was having a hard time trying to structure the point the way that I found most efficient, and it was really hard to fight off thoughts like, you know, You were playing much better in Australia, why can't you just play that same way here?

But I know that it's a process. For me, I just kept trying to learn from every point that I played. So, yeah.

Q. Is your family here at the tournament in the stands watching?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, that was my mom. My dad, he's not watching my matches as per usual. He might be like walking around or something, but he's not physically in the stands, no.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I feel like definitely the conditions were really tough today. Like it was definitely windy, but I don't remember thinking too much about it, so clearly it didn't bother me that much. I would say more I was getting used to playing a match again because it's been a while. For me, I was just trying to get in the motion of things.

Yeah. So my mom's last match she watched me play was the 2020 Australian Open. Of course I wanted to win a lot, especially because she was here today. But I think what she wanted the most, she just wanted me to save a towel for her (smiling). Definitely going to do that.

No, not really. I think I just asked my sister if she wanted to come because my entire family is down here. So like after this tournament we'd probably go hang out with our family. So it's not really like a reoccurring theme. I don't know if I'm going to travel with her often. Probably not, because she has a lot of projects that she wants to work on. So, yeah.

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