

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



N. OSAKA/E. Mertens

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THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I wanted to ask you, since the restart of the tour last summer, what would you say is the one thing that you have made the most improvement on in your game?

NAOMI OSAKA: For me, I feel like a lot of things. Honestly I have worked with Wim on a lot of things, but I would say the most important part is I talk to him a lot, and for me my mind is really, really important. So I would just say I'm mentally stronger coming back from everything.

Q. What's one thing that you still are looking to improve upon? Does anything come to mind that you're still most eager to make improvements on?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah. I feel like tennis is a sport that's always evolving, and there are constantly like new players and you always have to, I don't know, have a lot of different strategies.

So I think just being able to adapt quicker and, like, have a set strategy that I really have a high win rate with.

Q. Looking at the draw, your next opponent could either be Pegula or Sakkari. Do you have any thoughts on your next match?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah. I feel like they are both really, really tough players. I have played Pegula once, and I feel like I have played Sakkari more than once. I just don't remember where. But, yeah, I have had experience playing both of them.

Pegula, she's doing really well right now. For me, I feel like I have been watching them play often on the TV, so whoever I'm going to play -- it feels nice not playing someone that I don't have any information on.

Q. I noticed your hat, NC Courage hat. I'm curious

how your ownership tenure has been so far? How much you're interacting with the team or how much you're able to be involved with anything going on with them, what that's been like for you so far?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, so my ownership is really -- actually, they are super nice. For me, this is like my first venture into that type of world, so I feel like I'm learning the ropes. But they are letting me create my own kit, so I'll be able to design my own jersey so I'm really excited for that.

Everyone is super nice and helpful and supportive. So I'm really glad.

Q. I know you're based in California and Florida, and both states have different time tables for when they are rolling out the vaccines for coronavirus. Curious if that's something you're actively pursuing, if it's a priority for you to get one, what your approach is towards that.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I'm planning on getting one. For me, I feel like whenever I'm eligible, I guess.

Q. Most players say they need a lot of matches, a lot of tournaments to get into rhythm to peak at the right times. Seems like over the last 12 months you have been able to jump in and find that level pretty quickly, even if you have a bit of a break or even you had the walkover the other day, and you played sharp today. What do you think is the key to that, to being able to almost generate your own rhythm, seems like, to find your best game?

NAOMI OSAKA: Well, I'm kind of giving myself no choice there, because I don't really play that many tournaments, but, yeah, I think for me just playing, I guess, playing on the tour for a while I have sort of learned what works for me.

I have always noticed that I'm not the type of player that really needs that many tournaments to feel a groove. In fact, I sort of started feeling like it was the opposite. I would get kind of burned out more quickly if I played more tournaments. So, yeah, I think that's the reason why I play the schedule that I play now.



Q. There have been a lot of dogs on-site at the Miami Open. We saw different player dogs walking around. I'm curious if your dog would do well in an environment where he was allowed to walk the grounds, or are we never going to see Panda at a tournament?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, you'll never see her at a tournament. She's a bit odd, like sometimes I think she's a real people person and then randomly she'll just start barking. So I'm not really sure what triggers her, but I would really hate to be the dog owner who has that one loud, annoying dog. So, yeah, I wouldn't even risk it.

Q. Does No. 1 mean much to you, or is it a case -- because there is still a chance that you could get back No. 1 here in Miami, or is it a case of, yeah, if you get it, great, and if you don't, so be it. Because you have been No. 1 and it's maybe a case of been there, done that?

NAOMI OSAKA: I wouldn't say it's a case of been there, done that. Like, I understand how important it is and what an honor it would be to be No. 1, but for me, I realize that my mind doesn't function well if I keep thinking about all the things that could be, so right now I'm just thinking that I'm playing this tournament. Every round that I play is against a really tough opponent.

So I'm trying to take it round by round, and hopefully it will lead me to the finals or to win, and I know that, you know, if you win more tournaments, eventually you'll get the opportunity to be No. 1. But I'm not just thinking of it as a straightforward goal right now.

Q. Are you maybe aware of what needs to be done if you were to regain No. 1 at this tournament?

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, honestly, yeah, I'm not really keeping up with that. Like I don't really mind it at all.

Q. To that end of having been there, done that, you're still young enough that you're still achieving new things on the tour, this is your first quarterfinal in Miami. Are those sorts of things still exciting for you, or are those things you're thinking of when you come to a tournament where you haven't had that amount of success yet, or how does it feel to be in the quarters here?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, for me it feels really exciting. I mean, as a kid I grew up watching players play here, and I don't know. Like, Miami, of course the venue is different, but it definitely feels very special. This is like one of my

favorite tournaments to play, and of course I'm sad I haven't been able to get to the second week the last times that I have played this tournament. But I'm here now, and hopefully it will go well this time.

Q. Following up on the soccer jersey question. You're designing a kit for the team to wear in competition? Is that working with -- Nike I guess is also with them? Is your sister involved? I know she's a big design person, as well.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah. My sister is involved in all of my design things. It's been that way since we were kids. For us it's sort of like a fun project to do, especially just learning the ropes on designing a kit. We have never done that before.

I'm sure there are certain rules. We can't really go crazy on the design. But all in all, it should be a really fun experience.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, for me I feel like -- I don't know. The way that I relate to things is that I see videos of people getting hurt, and I immediately think of, like, what if this was my ojii-chan or what if this was my mom? So it really hurt me a lot. Then I was asked to be in it, and I think I -- I didn't really watch the whole video, but I saw maybe Kei was in it, too. Yeah, I think it definitely hits home for a lot of us, and we are all just trying to find ways to support.

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