

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



M. SAKKARI/N. Osaka

6-0, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What can you learn from a loss like today? And what makes Maria such a great competitor?

NAOMI OSAKA: What can I learn from the loss? I'm not really sure right now. I mean, I knew that, like, going into the match, we have played a couple of times, and I knew she's like a really big fighter, so I knew it wasn't going to be easy.

But I'm not really sure, because I felt like I haven't been playing well this whole tournament, like I couldn't find a groove, so mentally it's really hard for me to, I don't know, like play against really high-quality players with what I feel is low-quality tennis.

Yeah, I'm not really sure what I'm supposed to learn from today.

Q. It's been so long since you have lost a match, more than a year. I'm wondering how you're feeling about this and how you sort of process this first loss? I'm guessing you sort of forgot a little bit what it feels like to lose since it seems like a lifetime ago before the pandemic.

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly, not really. For me, I feel a bit similar to when I lost to Coco in Australia, but I think in this match it's different. Like I feel I played worse here possibly but I fought more.

So I think I am improving in that way, because I feel like even if you're not playing great you should still find ways to win. I'm trying to find ways to do that.

Hopefully I don't lose like this a couple more times, but I think the more times that stuff like this happens, the more I'll learn from it.

Q. Now you move on to clay, as this is the last hard

court tournament. What are your thoughts on that? Are you planning on preparing for this surface where you haven't won a title yet? What are you feeling about what it's going to take to do that? What are your ambitions for clay this year?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, definitely I'd love to win a tournament on clay. I think for me I'm going to learn a lot from Wim. He's very energetic and excited to move on to the new surfaces.

It's definitely going to be, I guess, a really fun and good time with everyone, because, I don't know, I haven't lost since Yutaka has come on the team. It's just a good energy to have for me. I feel really bad for my team whenever I lose, but they were all very, very supportive.

Yeah, it's going to be really interesting.

Q. How much do you think the mental side of things played a part? Everyone has been talking about the fact you haven't lost for so long. Do you think that put a lot of pressure on you mentally? I remember the last time you had a slam streak, 2019 at the French Open. Everyone was talking about that streak as well, like 17 matches or something, and you talked about the pressure of that affecting your play. Do you think that affected your play here? Do you think now that you've got this out of the way you'll be less pressured in the clay season and maybe play with a bit more freedom?

NAOMI OSAKA: I feel like no matter what I'll have more freedom on the clay courts and the grass than on hard, because I feel like I'm still learning a lot on those surfaces.

It's hard to say, but I do think like the last time I was in this seat I wasn't really thinking at all about rankings, but someone asked me that question, so then I did start to ponder about it a lot.

So maybe unwillingly that put pressure on myself. But I feel like even if it did, I should be able to rise above that. You know, I'm going to be asked various questions in the future anyway, so this is definitely something that shouldn't bother me as much as it did.



Q. Can you talk a little bit about where your head was at the beginning of the second set? You said you feel like you should find a way to win. Did you feel taking that 2-Love lead that you were getting there, or was there something she was doing that was keeping you out of your game?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I felt like I was getting there. I felt that even though it wasn't like pretty tennis -- like, I like to try to play perfectly, but, you know, that doesn't really happen most of the time, so I thought even though it wasn't pretty tennis, I was trying to find a way to win the set.

But I think -- I'm not really sure. Only I feel like I would need more time to reflect on it, but definitely -- I don't know. It felt different today.

Q. What do you think she does well? It seems surprising she hasn't progressed a little bit even more down the rankings.

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, she has a really good service return. I thought I was serving second serves pretty well, but she seemed to be always right there. Very athletic. So there is a lot of things that she does well.

Q. There are many people who say what you have done for a good stretch now is just amazing, but what's even more amazing is really what you have done off court. You have said there are things that are more important in life than a tennis match. My question relates to something pretty important that's going on in our country, the George Floyd trial. Have you been watching it to any extent? Are you aware of it? What are your thoughts? Do you feel in some way the American justice system is on trial?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, for me I have been keeping track of it. I think every day there is something new that happens on the news about it.

For me, like while I was here I was really trying to concentrate on my tennis. So of course I wasn't really trying to get too emotionally involved in what was happening. But I guess I'm free now, so, yeah.

Q. Just wondering if I could get your thoughts on the fact that Sakkari saved six match points in her previous round. You had a similar experience in Australia saving a match point and then going on to win the title. Just wondering for you what's it like when you have saved a match point? Do you feel different in your next matches? Do you feel more dangerous, perhaps, more confident? Did you consider that today as you stepped onto the court

against Sakkari?

NAOMI OSAKA: No, I didn't consider that today. I feel like when I'm playing at least and I save match points I don't really think too much about it, just because I'm trying to take it one point at a time.

Yeah, I would say definitely after you play matches like that, like matches that are really close, you feel like if it gets really tight, then you're able to, you know, do better and have more leverage because you've gotten out of a situation that was close before.

So maybe it did affect her mindset, yeah.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think for me, I don't know, I feel like everyone's either used to me winning a tournament or losing quite early. So getting to the quarterfinals, I'm not sure how many times I have done this result. But if I look at it in a whole, I'm happy with how I did. I feel like even though I wasn't feeling that comfortable on this surface, I managed to get quite far, even though I only played two matches. But, yeah, I think this is the furthest that I have ever gone in this tournament, so that's something that I can be happy with in the end.

Yeah, definitely my serve wasn't, my first serve wasn't going in at all today. I'm not really sure if it's technical. I don't think so, just because I felt like technique-wise I have been getting better. I also feel like with Wim we always do, like, serve practices, and the rhythm at this tournament was pretty good. So for me I felt like today's service problems kind of came out of nowhere. But I don't know. Yeah, I'm not really sure.

Madrid.

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