

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Naomi Osaka

Press Conference



N. OSAKA/A.Sharma

6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Naomi, talk us through your thoughts on the match today, how happy you were with the way you played.

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I thought the match today went really well for me. I was just really focused on staying committed to every ball, and I thought I fought for every point. Glad I was able to win in two.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. The last time you were on court, you didn't feel that great. Did you feel better today?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah. Yeah, I feel better today. I think for me the situation in Indian Wells, I've kind of thought back on it. I realize, like, I've never been heckled. I've been booed, but not like a direct yell-out kind of thing. It kind of took me out of my element.

I feel like I'm prepared for it now. I was kind of bracing myself before the match to just like know that's a thing that could happen now.

Yeah, I think I just needed to change my mindset a little.

Q. How do you feel in this moment of your career?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I've been kind of reflecting on it for a while. For me, I kind of realize, like, anything that I do from this point is like a bonus. Of course, I want to win all the tournaments that I play. I want to win more Grand Slams.

But at this point in my life, I just want to be grateful for being healthy. There's a lot of really good players that might get injured or might get sick. I actually haven't gotten injured ever. Granted my career is quite short.

Yeah, just think of everything that I do as a bonus now. I've been able to achieve a lot. Hopefully I achieve more.

But I think I need to stay grounded.

Q. You were saying in your on-court interview that your main goal was to keep your composure. How do you prepare for that after the unexpected thing in Indian Wells? Not sure if you talked to your coaches...

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, so -- hmm. I don't know if I'm allowed to say this, but I finally started talking to a therapist after Indian Wells. It only took like a year after French Open.

Yeah, I don't know, she kind of like told me strategies and stuff. I realize how helpful it is. I'm glad that I have people around me that told me to, like, go in that direction.

But, yeah, I was basically just remembering all the things that she told me to do, just to take deep breaths and reset myself when I need to.

Q. Why this moment you decided to make this choice to talk to someone?

NAOMI OSAKA: Honestly because my sister kind of, like, seemed very concerned for me. I don't know. Like I feel like I've been trying a lot of different things because I tend to internalize things, and I also want to do everything by myself.

Wim kind of put it in a really good way. He was like, You hire a coach for tennis, for fitness. The mind is such a big thing. If you can, like, get a professional to help you out .5 percent, that alone is worth it.

Q. Can you talk about where you were last night or this morning when you heard about Ash? What are your thoughts in light of what you just said in terms of playing for yourself, living for your moments, being positive?

NAOMI OSAKA: I would say I heard or saw the news last night, like 3:30 in the morning. I needed to get up to use the bathroom.

My friend texted me. She's like, Yo, do you know that Barty retired?



I was like, Whoa, that's weird.

Then I went on Twitter and saw it was actually a thing.

Yeah, I feel, like, really happy for her. I know last year was quite tough. She didn't really go home at all. I think that certainly took a toll. But it was also really inspiring to watch how dedicated she was that entire year. I think she can leave with no regrets.

That's something I feel like she was super amazing for the sport, for me in particular. I just really loved watching her.

Yeah, I think what she did was ideal. I think it's cool to, like, leave the game when you're No. 1. You feel like you have nothing left to prove, you feel like you accomplished everything that you wanted to.

Q. What do you take away from that for yourself?

NAOMI OSAKA: Me? If I answer this question, Wim will get mad.

What do I take away for myself? I feel like she kind of I don't want to say set the boundary, but she, like, knew what she wanted to do, if that makes sense. I felt like after you win the Australian Open, of course there's sponsors that come and stuff like that. She clearly knew what she wanted to do.

It's going to be cool to watch what she does with the rest of -- I don't know if there's going to be a new career or if she's just going to be chilling, yeah.

Q. I feel like you and Ashleigh have been quite honest about the challenges of touring life. Did you ever communicate with her about those? Do you see any similarities, differences? Did you share stuff with Ash?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, for me, I first heard about her -- we played when we were both quite young in Mexico. Before that I just heard that she took a break from tennis for a while because she felt homesick. To me, this didn't really come out of the blue, especially with COVID.

But I would say, like, I'm not one that really is that outgoing. I exchange hellos and stuff with her, but I've never really had an in-depth conversation, which would be cool.

But I think, I don't know, there's also this barrier that tennis players put up that you might have to play this person and you don't want to, like, get too -- open up too much. That's how I see it, so...

Q. You mentioned your conversation with Wim. Is that something you think about being a full-time part of your team? Iga travels full-time with a coach or a professional to help on that mental, psychological side of things. Is that something you see at this point core to being part of your team or you're still figuring out where it fits in?

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I mean, I'm quite new to this. I would be lying if I said I know exactly the role that they would play.

But for now I feel like it helps me out a lot. I'm just going to keep moving forward with that, knowing the feelings that I have towards, like, wanting to improve that part of my life or that part of my head space.

I think, yeah, this person would be a part of my team, and they would be quite important.

Q. I appreciate what you've been saying about Ash. Would there be any standout moment, a moment that would come to mind with a meeting or a match that you've had with her?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think I played her, like, three or four times. I think the last time that I played her was in Beijing. I'm not so sure about that. That's for me the last memory I have of playing her.

I just remember for me it's a bit rare to play people that adjust so well. To me the ones that stand out is Ash and Bianca Andreescu. It was, like, such a fun match to play. For me that's the biggest memory I have. Just to play a match where it's pure tennis, there's nothing else going on. I think we were both just trying our best, being as respectful as we could.

I'm a bit sad that we couldn't play more matches like that. I wish I won my last match in Australia so we could have played that round of 16. I think things happen for a reason, so yeah.

Q. Is there any music going on?

NAOMI OSAKA: In my headphones right now (laughter)?

Q. If there isn't, if you chose a sound track for your press conferences, what would that be?

NAOMI OSAKA: That's so interesting (laughter).

No, I never have music on when I'm doing press. I feel like I want to hear the questions clearly and it might be a bit

disrespectful.

If there was a music choice? I like to listen to like ocean waves or rain. I have an app on my phone that just has ocean waves, rain, thunderstorms. I don't know why I find thunderstorms quite peaceful. If you could count that as a music (smiling).

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