

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

Monday, March 28, 2022

Miami, Florida, USA

## Naomi Osaka

### Press Conference



N. OSAKA/A. Riske

6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Another hard-fought victory today in Miami with a really good opponent. What were your keys to approaching the match today?

NAOMI OSAKA: I think keys to approaching the match, honestly, I felt a bit rusty because I haven't played in three days. So just kind of trying to get back confident and into the groove of things.

But, yeah, I guess just like knowing that the last time I played her, it's been a couple of years, and knowing that she's a really tough opponent and knowing she's a bit unorthodox, I would say, the trajectory of her balls were quite difficult for me.

Yeah, thinking about all those things.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

**Q. You were saying on court that you feel better about making the quarterfinals this year compared to making the quarterfinals last year. Looking back on your attitude or mindset last year, do you feel like you had to win every match because you were on this long streak and if a loss, even a quarterfinals, was a disaster for you on some level? What do you remember about what your mindset was then and how you have sort of rebuilt it right now?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I would say last year, yeah, there probably was a streak. I was also wanting to be No. 1. Then this year, like, I'm kind of taking it round by round.

I know that I'm playing really tough opponents, so every time I win, I'm just really happy about it. I don't know. I was thinking about it, but like I would probably kill to be in the spot that I was in last year, or even just seeded. Oh, I don't really want to play this extra round.

Yeah, I don't know. It's really an interesting, like, flipped perspective. I know there was a lot of things running

through my mind last year, as well. I'm not like dismissing that, but yeah, I don't know. This year I'm happy to be healthy. I luckily haven't had any major surgeries in my career so far, so that's good. Yeah.

**Q. In terms of things running through your mind, you mean the winning streak or something else?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, there is always something going through my mind. Yeah, there is probably the winning streak, wanting to be No. 1, wanting to win the tournament, just like a bunch of things that aren't, like if you think about it, it's not really important, but like at the time it was so heavy in my head.

**Q. Roland Garros recently announced that they are going to play a super-tiebreaker, a 10-point tiebreaker at 6-All, and all of the majors are going to do that this year. I'm not sure if you knew that. Wondering what your thoughts are on that. And if you have one memorable tiebreaker that you have played in your career that really if you think about it stands out.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I wasn't aware of that, but also, I would love to play a tiebreaker in Roland Garros. I would love to play a long match there. I don't know. My records are not that great.

One standout tiebreaker? I don't know if the match I played against Kvitova, Australian Open, the second set, was that a tiebreaker, does anyone know? I think it was a tiebreaker and I think I lost, but it was just memorable to me, because I felt like I was able to regroup quite quickly.

Before that match, for some reason, I just felt like I would drag on the feeling of loss, but I don't know, I was able to turn it around. So after that, I felt like I was quite confident in myself in not losing, more say, but just being able to like keep a positive mentality.

**Q. As a follow-up to that, Tsitsipas came in and was asked similarly, and he said he thinks he would like to see the women play three-out-of-five sets. We know in the past Steffi Graf, they had it at the Virginia Slims Championships, would you like to play three out of five?**



NAOMI OSAKA: Does he want to play nine sets? If he tries to extend mine, I'm going to extend his (smiling).

Wait. He was asked that question or he just brought it up?

**Q. Yeah.**

NAOMI OSAKA: He was asked or he just brought it up?

**Q. He brought it up.**

NAOMI OSAKA: This guy is so funny, man (smiling).

I don't know. I feel like that would change the structure of tennis. Like people will start doing things differently in the gym and stuff like that. It will probably also get a very long time to be implemented, but you're also, like, a man is talking about a woman's sport, so I don't think his idea is going to go through.

**Q. The Oscars was relatively interesting last night, involving a tennis film, as well. A, did you see the tennis film? And B, did you see anything else of particular interest...**

NAOMI OSAKA: Wait. There was a tennis film?

**Q. King Richard, yeah.**

NAOMI OSAKA: You know what's weird? I still haven't watched that. And everyone is like asking me questions about it. I think my problem is like I'm waiting to see it on the airplane, but I haven't gone overseas yet.

So I know that's really bad. They used to have it on HBO Max, but then I downloaded it and it expired. But, yeah, so I really need to watch that. I saw Beyonce's performance. She was beautiful as always.

But, yeah, I saw the trending topic. There is a lot of memes about it. Yeah, it's funny and unfortunate at the same time.

**Q. You looked very composed and controlled in your games over the last two, three games. Last year that was probably not the case. What have you done to put yourself in this kind of mindset situation at this point?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I'm not sure if it's anything that I have done or just like the experiences in my life, because in Australia I felt like I was becoming more calm. Granted, my last match that I lost there, I was completely frazzled, but going into Indian Wells my intention was to be, you know, like pretty chill, and then that thing happened.

Now that I'm here, I'm just like no matter what happens, I won't let anything stop like my behavior and how like I put out energy in the world, if that makes sense.

So I don't know. Like clearly I have come here to do well, but if that doesn't happen, I just want people to remember me for being a fighter.

**Q. A follow-up, a question asked about playing three or five sets.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, you're taking this seriously?

**Q. Women have been paid equally in most of the tennis tournaments, right, so it's equal pay, equal work. So bearing that in mind, why shouldn't the women also do the equal work if they're getting equal pay?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Oh, that's a very interesting question that I didn't think I'd get asked.

I don't want to be rude. I'm like really trying to structure this in a way that's not like off-putting, but I think it's like decades of hard work, you know what I mean? Like up until now, the women have been putting in the work. It's not just like, oh, it's come out of nowhere that you get paid the same, you know what I mean?

So it's like the history of the WTA has been leading them into advocating for equal pay with Billie Jean King, Venus, Serena, all that. And I also think ticket sales are important. I think the WTA has really good up-and-comers, the No. 1 player in the world, Iga is like 20, right? I don't know. It's who people find interesting. Coco is amazing, as well.

So I can't really, you know, give you a PowerPoint presentation on your question, but for me, I feel like the revenue that you generate, like ticket sales is very important, and I think the WTA is doing a really good job with that.

**Q. I should just point out that as far as the prize money aspect is concerned, equal prize money at the majors, was pushed by a man, late head of the ATP who actually got it across the line for Wimbledon and the rest followed. But what I wanted to ask you about was Nick Kyrgios, and you have spent a bit of time with him. Curious to know if y'all have discussed the mental health aspect between the two of you, knowing that it's been pretty public on both of your making comments on that aspect.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I would say, I don't know if he

wants me to even talk about this, but I would say probably after US Open or something, he reached out. For me, it's been very interesting to watch him, just because I never really could tell like what his actual personality was like.

But, yeah, I would say he's a nice guy, very polite, and we have talked about stuff like that but not really deep kind of. Kind of more surface level. Yeah.

**Q. I was speaking with him at length this morning, and he had a lot of very positive things to say about you, and that he can relate to what you have been through and what the pressures are that you're having to carry.**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, for sure. When I was like coming on tour, or watching him, because he's been on tour for a very long time -- or not very long, but long enough. I don't know. I kind of thought like he was my brother. Like we kind of look the same to me.

I don't know. And I always felt like his behavior was kind of like -- I'm not trying to be offensive; I hope he doesn't read this and take it this way -- like someone that can't really handle the pressure too well, so they are kind of overwhelmed.

For me, I relate to that feeling a lot, but I think we channel it in different ways. So, yeah, for me I feel like he also has a lot of responsibility, because even now, coming to the practice courts, he has a lot of kids watching him.

I don't know. I know that he loves that, but yeah, I think it's a bit of a double-sided coin.

**Q. Men could also always play two out of three if they cared so much. But curious, back to King Richard, how much do you feel like you know the Williamses' origin story? I know you grew up as a fan of them. How much do you feel you know their story, history, those things right now?**

NAOMI OSAKA: I mean, I feel like I know it pretty well. I read Serena's book, and also, coming up on tour, my dad would talk to Mr. Williams a lot. My trainer was also talking to Mr. Williams.

So they would like pass down stories and stuff. It's just like really cool, because I feel like it's so interesting how one family is so monumental for the sport.

I feel really bad I haven't watched the movie yet. Yeah, I hear that all the time, yeah. I should watch it, for sure.

I wouldn't say like I took a class on their story, but I would say like for me it resonates deeply, because some of the

things that they went through, I feel like I went through the similar thing with my dad.

**Q. Which trainer was it of yours?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Abdul.

**Q. I just want to ask you just how comfortable you feel in South Florida. You just seem really happy here. When you're out there playing in these conditions and so close to where you grew up, do you actually feel like you are home? Do you think about yourself as a kid? Does it really feel different here than anywhere else on tour?**

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I'd definitely say it feels much different, just the humidity alone. Yeah, I grew up when it was the Sony Ericsson in Key Biscayne, and of course it was much different then. For some reason, I remember getting crepes, they used to have -- it was amazing (smiling).

But, yeah, I definitely feel like it's more of a home vibe, because I feel quite comfortable with my surroundings. Like I know which turn to take when we're out traveling here and stuff like that.

I'm not sure if all of this helps me, but right now I'm feeling quite comfortable.

(Naomi's answers to questions in Japanese.)

NAOMI OSAKA: Yeah, I think for me it's never like a single person that pushes out the idea, you know what I mean? I feel like it's been the whole organization.

I have been watching the WNBA trying to get better conditions for their players, as well. It's been very interesting to see like who's rallying behind them and stuff like that.

I know recently they had this incident about the New York Liberty wanting to get a jet for their players, and then everyone else said, No, that's unfair and stuff like that. It's really interesting to see the development of the league and how it's going to progress.

For me, going back like way back to your last question, I think kids are the future. I think how they see you is very important, because without any role model or an idol, you don't really know what you want to be, at least for me.

I think it's important that the WTA keeps pushing new faces. Not new faces but at least promotes the younger players, not necessarily the top players all the time, but just

players that did well, like, went to the quarters and is young or something like that.

I think it's important that for me I came up on the Rising Stars. I know they don't do that anymore, but I think things like that are really important. The ATP has the NextGen. It kind of like teaches them how to like navigate the ATP life, as well, I think, just to have that one big tournament.

So I think it would be cool if the WTA did that again just to promote the younger stars and have people backing them up.

Yeah, I have played Collins before. I think she's a really tough opponent. She's been playing really well, though I don't think it's really a surprise. She's very aggressive.

For me, I feel like I just need to somehow be in control at all times. I can't let her push me back. But I'm sure Wim is going to give me like the whole computer analyzation type of thing, but right now my gut instinct thinking about the match is just to be as aggressive as I can and put the ball in at the same time.

Yeah, I think for me, like, playing Riske today, she just fought for every point. Also, I know her serve speed isn't that fast, like I was watching it every time I got aced. But it's kind of hard for me to read her serve, so I think that that was working really well for her, or it's just another day in the office for her. Yeah, I think her serve was really good.

I also think normally I can kind of overpower people, but she was on the forehand kind of slapping it back in an odd way that made it kind of hard for me to hit away from her.

That's what I knew I needed to do in order to beat her in the match. Yeah, it kind of just felt like she had answers for some of the things that I was doing, so we were both adjusting from there.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports