

Naomi Osaka withdraws from French Tennis Open

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Tennis superstar Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from the French Tennis Open citing stress from having to address the world's media. Japan's world number two Osaka, 23, announced she did not want to do interviews after her matches to "protect her mental health". The Women's Tennis Association said this was in breach of her obligations as a professional player. It initially threatened to expel her from the tournament if she did not talk to the media. It has since backtracked and said it wants to "create meaningful improvements" in supporting players with mental health problems. It added: "We commend Naomi for sharing in her own words the pressures and anxieties she is feeling."

Naomi Osaka is a four-time Grand Slam singles champion and is the reigning champion at the US Open and the Australian Open. She has had problems coping with the stress of being in the spotlight as one of tennis' biggest stars. She said: "The truth is that I have suffered long bouts of depression since the US Open in 2018." Organisers of the four Opens have faced criticism for the way they have handled Ms Osaka's mental health concerns. However, it recently stated: "We empathise with the unique pressures tennis players may face." Many top players have said they are fully behind Ms Osaka. Serena Williams offered her support, saying: "I feel for Naomi....I wish I could give her a hug."

Sources: mainichi.jp / bbc.com / espn.com

Writing

There is no need for sports stars to talk to the world's media. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

superstar / stress / address / interview / mental health / obligations / pressure / words / champion / coping / spotlight / truth / depression / criticism / unique / support / hug

True / False

- 1) Naomi Osaka pulled out of a tennis tournament because of anxiety. T / F
- 2) Naomi Osaka is currently the world number one in the women's game. T / F
- 3) The Women's Tennis Association said it would expel Ms Osaka. T / F
- 4) The Women's Tennis Association praised Ms Osaka for speaking out. T / F
- 5) Ms Osaka is the current US Open and Australian Open champion. T / F
- 6) Ms Osaka said she has battled depression for over a decade. T / F
- 7) Very few tennis players have supported Naomi Osaka's actions. T / F
- 8) Serena Williams said she wanted to hug Ms Osaka. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. withdrawn | a. current |
| 2. address | b. changed one's mind |
| 3. breach | c. periods |
| 4. backtracked | d. dealing |
| 5. commend | e. talk to |
| 6. reigning | f. cuddle |
| 7. coping | g. pulled out |
| 8. bouts | h. specific |
| 9. unique | i. violation |
| 10. hug | j. praise |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you think of tennis?
- c) How big a loss is Naomi Osaka's withdrawal from the tournament?
- d) How can sports stars better cope with depression?
- e) How easy is it for people to speak about mental health in your country?
- f) What pressures do sports stars face?
- g) Are the pressures for players greater today than ever before?
- h) What questions would you like to ask Naomi Osaka?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. stress from having to address | a. her a hug |
| 2. this was in breach | b. and anxieties |
| 3. It initially threatened to expel her | c. singles champion |
| 4. It has since | d. behind Ms Osaka |
| 5. the pressures | e. of her obligations |
| 6. a four-time Grand Slam | f. bouts of depression |
| 7. the stress of being | g. the world's media |
| 8. I have suffered long | h. in the spotlight |
| 9. top players have said they are fully | i. from the tournament |
| 10. I wish I could give | j. backtracked |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about Naomi Osaka?
- What do you think of Naomi withdrawing from the French Open?
- Should the organisers have shown more support for Naomi?
- What is more important, watching a tennis player play or talk?
- How stressful do you think being in the media spotlight is?
- Will Naomi's actions create a better understanding of mental health?
- What should sports bodies do about the mental health of its stars?
- What advice do you have for Naomi Osaka?

Spelling

- withdrawn from the French Tennis Open igncti stress
- this was in breach of her songilboita
- It laylnitii threatened to expel her
- It has since akktrebcadc
- We cendmmo Naomi for sharing
- the pressures and atniexesi
- the nnierrggi champion
- She has had problems ogcnpj
- I have suffered long otubs of depression
- faced rciicimst
- We eispemta
- unqeu pressures tennis players may face

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. e	3. i	4. b	5. j
6. a	7. d	8. c	9. h	10. f

Role Play

Role A – Tennis Player

You think a tennis player has the most stressful life. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their sports aren't as stressful. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): ski jumper, archer or F1 driver.

Role B – Ski Jumper

You think a ski jumper has the most stressful life. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their sports aren't as stressful. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): tennis player, archer or F1 driver.

Role C – Archer

You think an archer has the most stressful life. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their sports aren't as stressful. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): ski jumper, tennis player or F1 driver.

Role D – F1 Driver

You think an F1 driver has the most stressful life. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their sports aren't as stressful. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): ski jumper, archer or tennis player.

Speaking – Stressful Sports

Rank these with your partner. Put the most stressful jobs at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| • Tennis player | • Archer |
| • Goalkeeper | • Rock climber |
| • Ski jumper | • F1 driver |
| • Boxer | • Snooker player |

Answers – True False

1 T	2 F	3 T	4 T	5 T	6 F	7 F	8 T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.