

# Nike, Nissan and Other Sponsors Declare Support for Naomi Osaka After She Drops Out of French Open for Mental-Health Reasons

The tennis superstar posted a statement via Twitter announcing her decision on Monday afternoon.

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Tennis superstar Naomi Osaka announced via Twitter on Monday that she will be withdrawing from the remainder of the French Open tournament, citing ongoing struggles with social anxiety and depression.

Osaka, the second-ranked women's player in the world, was fined \$15,000 on Sunday after opting out of a post-match press conference following her first-round win over Patricia Maria Tig.

*[pic.twitter.com/LN2ANnoAYD](https://pic.twitter.com/LN2ANnoAYD)*

– NaomiOsaka (naomiosaka) May 31, 2021

“Here in Paris I was already feeling vulnerable and anxious so I thought it was better to exercise self-care and skip the press conferences,” Osaka explained of her decision not to participate in any media interviews related to the tournament. “I announced it preemptively because I do feel like the rules are quite outdated in parts and I wanted to highlight that.”

Osaka was recently named one of the world's highest-paid athletes, bringing in a whopping \$55 million over the last 12 months, with nearly \$50 million of the total coming in from high-profile sponsorships and brand partnerships. She was declared the highest-paid female athlete ever by Forbes last year after securing in excess of \$37 million in 2019.

One of Osaka's most profitable and enduring relationships has been with Nike, which currently pays the four-time Grand Slam singles champion \$10 million per year in a lucrative contract that expires in 2025. And the sports titan publicly declared its support for Osaka on Tuesday.

"Our thoughts are with Naomi," the company's statement read in part. "We support her and recognize her courage in sharing her own mental health experience."

The decision for Nike to publicly back the tennis star sends a signal to other brands that supporting athletes in their decision to prioritize mental health is to be encouraged, not frowned upon. And since the French Open levied its \$15,000 fine, several of Osaka's additional sponsors – notably Nissan, Mastercard and Nissin Foods – have released similar statements of solidarity.

Osaka, who resides in the U.S. but represents Japan in competition, has never been one to remain quiet about issues close to her heart, making headlines after wearing masks with the names of police victim shooting throughout last year's tennis tournaments.

"By breaking the mold, Naomi is creating her own path to greatness and inspiring the next generation to embrace the unknown and define the future for themselves," Nike's statement added.

Osaka has run two apparel collections with the brand, the second of which is set to be released on June 17.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/373345>