

HHH-Naomi Osaka

Entrance Question: A full grown great white vs a full grown polar bear in an Olympic size swimming pool that is 7 feet deep and 75 degrees Fahrenheit, who wins?

Naomi Osaka didn't want to become a star. She didn't ask for all the fame and adulation that have come her way. In December of 2020, Naomi was named one of five [Sportsman of the year](#) by Sports Illustrated.

I get the feeling that she would rather walk the streets totally unrecognized.

At a time when it seems that almost everyone in this world wants to be famous, whether they have a talent or not, there's something very sweet and refreshing about Naomi, who certainly has a talent, but no need to be famous. She just wants to play ball. At 23, Naomi has become a force on the tennis court, winning the U.S. Open in September for the second time, coming back from a set down to beat Victoria Azarenka.

But in 2020 she also became a huge force *off* the court. Naomi came to understand the power of fame and learned how to use it for the greater good. How cool is that? She used her platform to raise awareness of violence against Black Americans by the police and others and to foster the conversation about how to combat it.

By wearing seven masks at the U.S. Open— with a new one for every round, each honoring a different Black victim of police violence or a racist attack—Naomi made an extremely powerful statement. Every time she walked out to play people were talking about which name was going to be on the mask. Breonna Taylor. Elijah McClain. Ahmaud Arbery. Trayvon Martin. George Floyd. Philando Castile. Tamir Rice ([show video 1 here](#))

On her own, she brought so much attention to their stories. Naomi's not someone you can dismiss as just a liberal *whatever*. This wasn't political. She was humanizing the enormous problem of police violence against Black people in America. This was about fairness. This was about human rights.

A few months before the U.S. Open, Naomi went to Minneapolis and visited the exact spot where George Floyd was killed to see and absorb and feel that herself. On the biggest stage in tennis, she would wear a mask with his name. Some critics thought Naomi was cocky for bringing seven masks to New York City—that assumed she would reach the finals, right?—but she had won the title before, along with another major, the Australian Open, in 2019. I thought the idea was brilliantly thought through and executed.

In August of 2020, Naomi sat down with [Chris McKendry of ESPN](#) to discuss the police shooting of Jacob Blake and her decision to sit out during the Western & Southern Open semifinals to protest in the fight for social justice.

Exit Question: **What allows some individuals to take a stand against prejudice/oppression while others choose to participate in it? Please share your thoughts in 4-5 sentences.**