

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

## Alexandra Eala

Press Conference



A. EALA/M. Keys

6-4, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Alex, congratulations. First top-10 win over the reigning Australian Open champion. Try to sum up how you're feeling right now.

ALEXANDRA EALA: I don't think I've had the time to process everything that's happened, so I'm taking it step by step and just focusing on what I need to do next, which is recover well, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Talk about what this means for the Philippines and you and Rafa's academy. I know you haven't processed yet, but you made history today.**

ALEXANDRA EALA: Yeah, it's a big thing to take in, and I feel it's important for me to take it in step by step. I'm so super proud of what I was able to accomplish, but it definitely fuels me more.

I know and it's in my mind that I have a next match, but I need to stop, and I need to recognize that what I did today was really amazing. I think my reaction on court, you know, sums up pretty much how I feel about it.

**Q. (Question about being a role model to kids.)**

ALEXANDRA EALA: I would like to think so. I want the kids at home to see more my attitude and more the grit I have on court more than the results that I get, yeah.

**Q. You had great success at the junior level. Is this kind of the success you envisioned for yourself someday on the WTA level?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: Of course. I think every single player here has envisioned themselves as a successful tennis player. This is the goal to do well on the WTA Tour, to win slams. In the end goal is to win slams, to get the rankings. I think this is a good step towards where I want to be.

**Q. You said in your on-court interview that growing up you didn't have sort of role models there or people to show you the way into a career. Can you just explain a little bit how it came about that you got the opportunity at the academy and how much credit they need to take, the people there, for you being able to take these steps forward?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: The academy has been my home for the past seven years. Of course, my family should take credit for the foundation that they laid out before they sent me there.

But of course, the academy was able to build on that foundation in such a way that I'm able to be where I am now. And I think the combination of everything that I've been through since I started tennis is what has led to this moment and what has led to me having all these opportunities.

As for not having someone to look up to, I think that goes for not someone Filipino who has done huge things in tennis in the open era or something, but of course, there have been so many role models in my life. You know, inspiration doesn't always have to come from someone big who did it in the Philippines.

For example, the young kids, the youth in the Philippines, they don't need to take inspiration from me. They can take inspiration from anyone they want. You know, they can take inspiration from other things, which is what I did growing up.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about that moment when you knew or maybe your family knew that you had to leave The Philippines in order to take that next step in your tennis career, and what was it like making that decision?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: It came as a shock because I was young. I was 13 when they made that -- when we made that decision, and it was a big decision for us. I think one of the deal-breakers for my parents was that they sent my brother along with me, so I still had family close.



You know, they did visit every once in a while, but it was definitely a big decision for me, for us. As soon as I heard that, I jumped at the opportunity because I knew that I had to get out of the country eventually to improve, yeah.

**Q. Can you tell us a little bit about your start in tennis, considering that the Philippines does not have as much of a tradition. How did you get started in tennis, and what type of facilities were you playing on before you were 13?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: So I got into tennis through my brother and my grandfather. It started out as a way for me to bond. My parents knew that they wanted me to get into sport, and my grandfather was kind of like a club player. You know, he would go to the club and just, like, you know, play with his friends. Then he coached my brother and a couple of other of my cousins. So I was kind of the next in line to do that and to spend time with him. It eventually blossomed into the career I have now, yeah.

**Q. How is your left leg?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: Well, it's good, it's good. I did go to the physio after the match, and I've treated that and we're handling it. So far so good.

**Q. Also, the match, you absorbed Maddie's pace. She hits huge. You got everything back. Was that the game plan going in, to just make her hit four winners on every point?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: Well, my game plan was to stick with what I know and to run. I knew the situation. I knew that she was a great player. I knew that she was a big hitter, so I had to keep my legs on and take the opportunities that I could find.

**Q. Badosa is your opponent tomorrow. She hurt her back today pretty badly, but she gutted it out. What's your thoughts on that match?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: I definitely think it's going to be a tough match. Paula has been on the scene for a long time, so she's very experienced, very good.

As for the back thing, I don't think -- I shouldn't. I won't comment on that. I'm going to go in tomorrow with all the intention that I had today and the matches before.

**Q. Who actually gave you the opportunity to go to Rafa's academy? Who is the scout, let's say, who put you together with him or with the academy? It seems that there must be something in the water there with back-to-back days with Coleman Wong getting through**

**yesterday and you today beating highly fancied players. Do you know Coleman Wong, and how much time do you spend there now compared to how much you are in The Philippines? A lot of questions, I know.**

ALEXANDRA EALA: Can you take it one by one?

**Q. Firstly, who was the scout or the person that put you in contact or put the Rafa Nadal Academy in contact for you to be able to go there?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: I believe that Carlos Costa was the one who reached out to my parents, but I need to double-check that, yeah, because it was my parents who were handling the communication. So I can't answer for sure, yeah.

**Q. Then how much contact do you have with Rafa? And the fact that Coleman Wong has done so well in addition to yourself, do you know him?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: Yes, I do. We're good friends.

**Q. The last question was, how much time are you actually still spending in Mallorca compared to how much time in The Philippines?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: So you know that life of a tennis player is very all over the world, so I'm traveling a lot. But most of the year when I'm not competing, I go back to Mallorca. It also depends on where I am in the world, where the tour is.

But I normally go back home for Christmas and sometimes preseason and leading up to Australia.

**Q. My question is similar to him, but yesterday Coleman Wong, he made a huge, big win. How much does his success give you motivation or belief that you can also do that?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: You know, I'm super happy for him and to see someone that I've known so long do so well is definitely an inspiration. Not just to me, but I feel in general a lot of people can take inspiration from him.

**Q. Your brother's name just for clarity?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: Miko. Miko is his name, M-I-K-O.

**Q. Is Coleman your boyfriend?**

ALEXANDRA EALA: No, he is not.

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