

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Alexandra Eala

Press Conference



A. EALA/I. Swiatek

6-2, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Alex, congratulations on a fantastic win. What are some of the emotions that you're feeling right now?

ALEXANDRA EALA: There is a lot of emotions, definitely. Happiness has to be on the top of the whole list.

Yeah, and i just still haven't had time to stop and think about it yet, but I'm super, super happy with the win (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. When that last point was played and Iga hit that ball long, I couldn't decide whether it looked like you were about to cry or you were crying, or you were just in a state of shock?

ALEXANDRA EALA: I couldn't decide either (smiling). I think I was so in the moment, and I made it a point to be in the moment every point that it's hard to realize what just happened. It's hard to realize that you won the match.

I really tried to soak it all in, because this has never happened to me before, and that's why I was looking at the screen. You know, I really wanted to keep that moment in my mind.

Q. You seem so poised for someone who has never been in this moment before. Can you tell us, is this just how your personality is, or is this something you have developed over the last few years? You seem so calm and so composed considering everything that's going on right now.

ALEXANDRA EALA: Yeah. And again, I think I don't have a lot of experience on the WTA Tour, that's for sure, but I do have experience with compartmentalizing. I have experience with being professional.

I have no hesitation to bring that part of me out when I'm

on court and when I'm in a setting that calls for professionalism. Yeah.

Q. Can you describe what did you think or did you feel before the game and after the game?

ALEXANDRA EALA: Nerves, before and after, because you don't really feel like it's over. That's why I said about the celebration, you don't really think that the match is over, because you're still thinking about the next point, what to do next.

Yeah, everybody gets nervous. I'm sure someone as great as Iga gets nervous from time to time. All these big players get nervous. It's a matter of how you deal with it and how, like I said, to compartmentalize, yeah.

Q. I'm sort of curious, like, at what point did you feel like, okay, I'm actually in this match, like she's won five Grand Slams and she's a former World No. 1, but I can hang with her? Then also, can you tell us all who came in for this? I think your parents came in, Uncle Toni was in the box? And did you work with Toni Nadal before much at the academy?

ALEXANDRA EALA: Sorry, let's take it one by one. Yeah, from the very beginning, I knew that I had the level to stick with her. She's very decorated. I mean, she's achieved a lot. She's achieved a lot, and she's someone that I have looked up to for a while.

So it was a pleasure to share the court with her and to be able to compete with her and to hang with her rhythm. It's something I'm very proud of, yeah.

Okay. Next one. Yeah, my family, a lot of my family did fly in. So my parents flew in last night, and my uncle and my cousin from Seattle also flew in. So a lot of extra motivation for my match today. I really wanted to have them see me winning, but I know they'd be happy just to see me compete in this setting.

And Toni also came in to Miami, although he had to catch a flight I think today. That did mean a lot, because I have been working closely with him for so long, alongside my



main coaches from the academy, JoAnne (phonetic), Sando (phonetic), Yuk (phonetic).

Yeah, it showed a lot about the confidence and the pride the academy has with me.

Q. Did Toni come in from Spain?

ALEXANDRA EALA: You know, I don't know. I also didn't know that he was going to come until this morning. Yeah, maybe you could ask him (smiling).

Q. Talk about the graduation ceremony. Iga was there. Was she a guest speaker? Did you interact with her? Did you hit with her? Now two years later you're beating her in a Masters 1000 quarterfinal.

ALEXANDRA EALA: Yeah, she was a guest speaker and celebrity guest. I think every year the academy tries to invite a public figure I guess to inspire the kids and to super inspire. I thought I was super lucky to have her during my graduation. She just came off I think a slam win also, Roland Garros, if I remember correctly.

But I remember that I walked up and she was, like, Oh, I know you. I have seen you.

I was, like, Yes (smiling).

Then she even did the whole ceremony with the whole class, tossed the hat, and I was so lucky, because I was, like, beside her.

Yeah, it's super surreal to think that the circumstances have changed, I'm facing her on court. I'm blessed to have that opportunity.

Q. The serve, she has one of the best service percentages on the tour. You crushed it. Was that the game plan going in, especially attacking the second serve? You played very close to the baseline.

ALEXANDRA EALA: I don't think that that was something that we highlighted in terms of tactics before, but it's definitely something that I took advantage of during the match.

You know, I like to be aggressive, and those were just some opportunities that I saw that were there, yeah.

Q. When you visualize playing in a quarterfinal of a big tournament like this with stadium courts and global TV, you must have thought about that when you watched other big games on TV. How did it compare, the reality, to what you would have expected on a big

occasion like that to be?

ALEXANDRA EALA: That's a good question. I feel this is definitely the first time I have played on a court this big. The first few games, because it's different when you're warming up and when you're actually playing the match, because the people are there and you feel so much air, like, I don't know how to explain it, there is air for miles, because I'm so used to playing with a court right next to me. You know, you can hear the match of the other courts.

So it was definitely something to adjust. But coming into the match, I really, really tried to just focus on the court and just feel like nobody else was there, yeah.

Q. That ability to compartmentalize, as you said, and be professional in the moments when you need to be professional, which is a good way to put it, is that something you learned at the academy, special parts of the curriculum there that are focused on that side of it, or is that something that's natural to you?

ALEXANDRA EALA: No, it's not something I learned in the academy. It's something I've gotten from, I guess, from my experience as the things I have been through leading up to this moment. It's also something my family has guided me through, and it's, you know, part of my family's values.

You know, they are successful people in business, they are successful in their own fields and people I look up to. I think they lead by example when it comes to that, yeah.

Q. You're going to become the first tennis star from the Philippines. How much interest is there in the Philippines in tennis at the moment? Do you think you're going to make a difference?

ALEXANDRA EALA: I would love to think that I make a difference. You know, that's the only thing I can do to give back to my country is to help inspire, to inspire change and positive change, to inspire people to pick up a racquet, to watch more tennis, watch more women's tennis.

I think that tennis in the Philippines has so much potential, because even though it's not as widespread as other sports, I feel that we have a lot of hidden talent, and if we can have the support to back it up and the exposure to back it up, then I think that Philippine tennis can be a big thing.

Q. Just watching you play so aggressively and being a lefty, I was curious if there are any current or past players on the women's side that you particularly looked up to in terms of your game style, kind of wanting to emulate them on the court?

ALEXANDRA EALA: Absolutely. Growing up my absolute favorite was Maria Sharapova. I loved her grit and obviously the way she styled herself and the way she carried herself, very young, and she was someone I really looked up to.

Then later on, people like Halep, people like Li Na, Barty, so many people I took inspiration from. So many people, yeah.

Q. When you won the US Open junior title, maybe back then it's already have the biggest achievement for you, but back in that time, can you recall that what was your dream in the future? Do you think that this comes very quick or takes longer than you were expecting when you felt like when you won the junior title?

ALEXANDRA EALA: My dreams have stayed the same, stayed constant. You know, I have always been a big dreamer. Like I said previously, to win Grand Slams has always been one of the end goals. To become No. 1 has always been one of the end goals.

I think that this result came in the right time. I try -- you know, being a successful junior doesn't mean that you're going to be a successful professional, so I made it a point to work hard every day and to trust that my time would come, and hopefully this is the time, yeah (smiling).

Q. There are so many questions to ask you. But firstly, what's the exact correct way of pronouncing your last name?

ALEXANDRA EALA: Eala. I say Alexandra Eala.

Q. In the last day or two, there has been a photograph circulating on social media of you, Iga, and Rafa. Have you got that picture?

ALEXANDRA EALA: Yes, I do. I don't think I will ever let that go. (Laughter.)

Q. How many messages have you had, and has Rafa himself messaged you?

ALEXANDRA EALA: No, Rafa has not personally messaged me. But then again, I have turned my notifications off. I think that's also part of being professional and compartmentalizing. Sorry I'm repeating, but yeah. I think it can be very overwhelming.

I won't deny that it's a lot. That's why I'm trying to manage it the best I can and just focus on what I need to focus on,

and then I can get back to everybody after the week is done, yeah.

Q. Ironically you may be facing a player who had as big of a shot, Raducanu, when she won the US Open. Can you talk about the possible matchups between Emma and Pegula?

ALEXANDRA EALA: You mean possible matchups with my semifinal or their match?

Q. Your semifinal with one of them.

ALEXANDRA EALA: Well, it's definitely going to be very difficult. I know that's for sure.

Whoever it is, they're going to bring their A game, and it's going to take everything in me to win. But I'm willing to give everything, yeah.

Q. This is also new to you playing in these big tournaments, but do you have a routine as you're going through tournaments that you will go back to basics and stick with what has worked for you? What have you been doing here and what do you anticipate doing during the next number of hours before you step on the court again?

ALEXANDRA EALA: Ordering in has been a constant this week. I feel like at the end of the day, I just want to relax and just be in my room and kind of rot there until I have to be on fire the next day.

Yeah, I have a lot of routines. Warming up is a big routine of mine. Going to the physio, taking care of my body. Just basically giving myself love. Just self-love and taking care of myself I think in the long run is what's going to keep me healthy, keep my happy, yeah.

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