

Miami Open presented by Itaú

Saturday, March 29, 2025

Miami, Florida, USA

Jessica Pegula

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/J. Pegula

7-5, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Jess, obviously maybe not the result you wanted today, but what an incredible run through this tournament, your first time in the Miami Open finals. Just give us your thoughts on the two weeks as a whole.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, super tough final today. Aryna played high level again. I feel like she just keeps coming up with raising her level in key moments of the match when she needs to, and I feel like that was the big difference today and the last few times I have played her.

Really happy with my last couple weeks. Making the final here is definitely very special, playing in front of a lot of friends and family that are really close to home, as well.

You know, happy to be in another big 1000 final and having consistent results and keep going deep in tournaments. I mean, the reason we play is to put ourselves in good chances to win these events. I was able to do that the last couple weeks.

So even though it wasn't the result that I wanted, again, giving myself an opportunity is all I can really ask for, you know, every time we go into a new event. So I'm happy about that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You have already kind of touched on this. Can you talk specifically about some of the positive takeaways that you have from the Miami Open, including facing the No. 1 player in the world and some of the great things that you did right today?

JESSICA PEGULA: I mean, I was breaking her. I was putting a lot of pressure on her serve, which is one of her best parts of her game.

I just wasn't able to hold consistently and kind of secure those breaks, which I feel was the big difference. It was tough on the one side against the wind. We were both

really having trouble holding, because if you hit one good return, it just felt like you couldn't do anything with the ball.

We are obviously both very good returners, but I think she was able to manage her serve a little bit better and get out of some really long games, whereas I felt like in my service games I was just behind.

I thought I returned well, moved well, put myself in good positions to get up on her, you know, hitting the ball clean. I just felt like she just was able to kind of hit the lines when she needed to hit that big serve or one-two punch when she needed to.

That was honestly just the main difference to me today, but as far as the last couple of weeks, I have been I think moving really well, I think consistently been serving a lot better, winning a lot more free points on my serve. Except for today unfortunately (smiling). But I have definitely been serving much better and moving really well.

I think I want to be able to take that going into the clay court season and really just use those things. I know I'm known more for a hard court player, but I think I can do well on the clay too. So hopefully with some of those intangibles that I have added to my game, that can help me have a good clay season.

Q. Maybe you touched on this, but was there one strategic thing that you felt you didn't execute today that you wanted to? Second question, I know Roger Goodell was here. Was your father also here?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, my dad was here, yeah. I saw Roger downstairs in the cafeteria. He was with his daughters and his family. I said hi to him, like, an hour or so before the match. Didn't know he was coming but just happened to see him when I was in the cafeteria, so it was kind of funny.

Yeah, my dad was here. My dad ended up coming back in town yesterday, so he was able to watch. Yeah, it was cool.

Q. Anything strategic...



JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I kind of already said that the last two questions, so maybe you can just... (Smiling.)

Q. Yeah, I think you have answered every question already, but how about second-serve points? She won 55% of them. Something there you could have improved on? And touch upon her weapons, that forehand.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it's tough with her. I mean, she's hitting her forehand and her backhand really well, ripping the ball, changing the direction of the ball, being really aggressive.

Every time that I thought she'd miss a couple shots or easy balls, you thought maybe it was going to go off and I had chances, she would just come back and hit three or four winners or three or four really good shots. You'd be, like, Oh, gosh, the forehand was going to break down or the backhand was going to break down, and it just never quite did, which is something, as her being the No. 1 player in the world I think has gotten so much better is that when she doesn't really have, like, bad swings anymore. When something goes off, it maybe goes off for a point or two and then it's back.

So I think that was something. Yeah, the serve, the second serve, I think I started mixing in a lot more kick serves, which I think helped, but it was kind of a little bit too late, felt like.

I was winning some more free points, maybe wasn't so much on the defensive. I think I caught her off-guard a little bit, which is something she did to me, as well, you know, kind of getting more of the first serve in and changing the pace of the serve.

I wish maybe I would have done that a little bit earlier in the first set instead of maybe waiting till the end or waiting till I was down Love-30 or Love-40 in the game, maybe would have helped me put more pressure on her in those return games and take some pressure off of me not having to come back from Love-40 or something like that.

Q. Nice tournament. Sounds like you're saying she was better than she was in August when you started this run of meeting her on these big stages?

JESSICA PEGULA: I mean, I feel like every match has been kind of the same. I don't know if she's better. I just meant for today we were both kind of struggling to hold and we were both in each other's service games every time.

I just thought that this match specifically she definitely went

and kind of mixed up and went more, like, a hard slow kick, kind of went for more first-serve percentage, mixing up the paces on the serve a little bit.

I think she maybe went to that sooner than I did and was able to get away with, you know, holding serve a few more times, especially in that first set, where in the second set I think I was trying to go for too much on my first serves. So I wish I would have mixed that up maybe a little bit sooner, but I didn't and she just got into a rhythm I felt like on her returns where I wasn't getting any free points or any easy second balls off my serve.

Q. Sorry for asking some, like, pros of your opponent, but what is the biggest challenge playing against her? I mean, the speed of her shot or more that her shot has more spins or placement? What is the most difficult thing to handle her strokes?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, it's not necessarily, like, I ever feel pace of shot as much. I still feel there are other girls I have played where they hit harder, but I just think she's, like, her first two balls are really good. She's really good at being aggressive off the first ball and not letting you kind of dictate the point.

I think her movement's gotten a lot better, and then she added more slice, dropshots, she's gotten kind of better at those intangible shots.

Like I was saying, kind of the serve. If it's not maybe working, I think she definitely has two or three serves she can go to to help her start the point instead of always relying on a second serve the whole time.

So, I mean, there is a lot of things she really does well. Everyone talks about her aggressive style of play, which is for sure, but she's always kind of had that, and I think it's more of her being able to mix in the other intangibles that makes her aggressive game play even more successful.

Q. Seb Korda and Grigor Dimitrov talked about embracing the opportunity to play the best player in the world. Do you embrace the opportunity to play the best?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, of course. We're all measuring each other against each other, really. When someone's really dominant, Iga we had that one year I feel couldn't lose, and now it feels like the last year Aryna has, especially on the hard courts, has been kind of unstoppable virtually.

I mean, you have to embrace the challenge, you have to embrace that they are the best player in the world for a

reason, and if you want to win these big tournaments and big titles, you have to beat those types of players. Maybe not always because maybe they lose or something like that, but playing them in a final is a privilege, because you know if you do get that win, it's even more special.

I definitely like embracing that challenge, although I am getting a little annoyed with playing her (smiling). I don't know if I would have won if I played someone else. But, man, I mean, it's three titles. Come on (smiling).

But definitely you have to think like that in order to push yourself to be better. I felt like that's something she did when Iga was having her really great year, and then you saw her get a lot better. It's always a challenge of pushing each other at the top.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports