

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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## Alexandra Eala

Press Conference



ALEXANDRA EALA / Laura Siegemund

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**Moderator:** First question from me, Alex, welcome back to Miami. Just give us your thoughts on this extremely long match today and the win.

**Alexandra Eala:** I'm really happy with the match today. I really had to dig deep. I know that Laura is such a fighter, so I'm happy with my patience and my strength, both physically and mentally today.

**Question:** You're so popular and you're dealing with it. It's incredible. And we talked to James Blake a little bit, and he said he has to give you center court. What is it like with all the adulation? How are you handling it?

**Alexandra Eala:** I like to think that I'm handling it pretty well. Of course, I'm super grateful to all my fans, because they really, they take the time out of their days to come see me. It's a lot of effort to go out and to come to these events. So, I hope they have fun. They purchase tickets, so they're spending their hard-earned money to come see us. So, I'm really grateful for that.

**Question:** Does it seem like a year that this really got you started? Coleman Wong did well here last year as well, and coming back to play this first match after last year, how much pressure did you feel that you didn't want to go out first round as well?

**Alexandra Eala:** There's been a lot of talk towards my direction about this. So, you say pressure of coming back and it's real. I mean, it's definitely real. I guess it's natural for the public or whoever, to have some sort of expectation, because I did so well last year. But how I approach it is that all the work's been done before this tournament. So, I I'm happy, because I've been doing well throughout the whole year, and I've had results even just last week and the week before, and throughout the year, from the last Miami Open to this year. So this isn't a tournament where it's like, it's everything's on the line, you know, and if I don't get the points here with that, I have to defend. I'll get them somewhere else. So even when I lost the first set today, I was just thinking, you know, that was a good first set. I was able to compete. She played well when it counted. And I think that's kind of also the mindset that helped me sustain throughout the rest, like the other two hours of the match.

**Question:** When you win this tournament, changes lives. Alcaraz changed his last year, yours, Mensik, maybe even Fonseca, to a certain point. Can you tell us the big changes in your life after you left this tournament and again, you are having a great year, quarters and semis almost every week, talk about your progress.

**Alexandra Eala:** Well, I definitely have a lot of, a lot more exposure now in the public eye, which is such a blessing, of course, to have this support, and for me to be able to, to feel the support in my journey, it means so much, because I really do work so hard, and, yeah, it's, it's acknowledged, and it's, it's celebrated. What have been the biggest changes, I think, in terms of my life, this is my, kind of my first year being fully on tour. So, since Miami of last year, I haven't played a tournament that wasn't WTA. So, I think professionally, the level that I'm surrounded by has really kicked up a notch. So, I think that's pushed me in many different ways. And of course, off the court, I'm recognized a little bit more, which is obviously a very good thing. That means business is good. That means things are going well on court. And of course, that means that people like me, so I guess that's, you know, that's always nice.

**Question:** Speaking of your first year on tour, I'm curious if there's anything that you and your team have learned or adapted on how you are approaching the matches, or maybe how you're approaching recovery, maybe now that you have more experience or more resources?

**Alexandra Eala:** Let me think, it's hard to answer because I've had the same team pre-Miami last year, until now. And I'm sure they have changed some things within them, but I think that's also what's the great thing about my team is that they don't make it feel like such monumental changes for me. It feels like, you know, we take it day by day, and they really keep my feet on the ground.

**Question:** You seem to have a very great sense of style on Instagram. Do you love shopping? I saw your trip to Nike, where the images were really great, and you had all these sort of like, custom sweaters and really cool stuff. Is that something you're interested at all in, fashion, and maybe in the future, eventually having, sort of like custom kits on court and things like that?

**Alexandra Eala:** I would love it. I am a fashion lover. I'm very much into kind of, like pop culture, and for example, like when the Met Gala comes out and all the looks like, I'll go through them, and I'll see, not to say that I'm a fashion expert. I like to style myself. I like to feel cool, because when I think I look good, I feel good, makes me more confident. So, yeah, I am. That's something I would love, I'm interested in.

**Question:** Last year here, you played Iga in the quarter finals, and you got that really big win. There is a chance you could potentially play her again. What are your thoughts on facing her again, given the experience you had here last year?

**Alexandra Eala:** I would love to face her again. Of course, matches against players of Iga, of Iga's caliber is always a great opportunity for me. And the fact that I'm able to put myself in a position where a potential matchup with her or even Magda is a possibility, I think that's a really positive sign for me, especially after today's match and how long that dragged out. I'm really happy, yeah, and very excited.

**Question:** Obviously, we've talked a lot about your popularity. Particularly, I want to ask you about your popularity within the Asian community as well. We've seen so many of the younger Asian tennis players now rising. We've mentioned Coleman, Wong, and Janice is currently battling it with Yulia right now. I'm just curious to know your thoughts on the development and the rise of young Asian players, as you guys are making your way up the ranks and doing so well of these tournaments.

**Alexandra Eala:** I think it's such a good thing for tennis that Asian players are coming up and we're coming out on fire. And I think representation is really important, and I think we're in an era right now where a lot of different kinds of demographics are being represented in the tour. So, I think that's a great thing. I remember growing up, I really looked up to Li Na because she was Asian, and, of course, because she was just such a great competitor. So, I think this could be really great for the next generation.

**Question:** When you look back on your career, of course, the last year, this tournament might be one of the biggest achievement for you, but besides that, is there any big wins or a particular tournament where you get confident, or it's not necessarily about the match, but maybe it's some like decision making, like going to Rafa's academy or something. So, what do you think it's kind of like a turning point of your career?

**Alexandra Eala:** The Miami Open last year was the obvious turning point in my career. But aside from that, I think it's really gone step by step, and it's

been a progression, which I think is very healthy, and it really, I'm happy looking back at it, to see the work I've put in, behind the scenes, and seeing it come to life on court. Even when I lose, it's always, it's always part of the process. So, I'm happy knowing that after those certainly difficult moments, I was able to bounce back.

**Question:** Putting this in perspective, you've always said to us that you're so happy that tennis is booming in the Philippines. Courts are hard to get so many young players are now taking up the sport, but to push it up to the next level, to see someone else like you, we know your path was through the through the Nadal Academy at age 12. In other sports, it's also been the same. I've been around Philippine sports for 20 years, and it's always that if you want to make the international level, you have to train abroad. We had the Philippine Open. It's booming, but what is your take on when you see the technology back home, of coaching, development of players, versus what you've experienced in Spain? What are your thoughts on that? And how would a college star or high school star make that next leap? Is it necessary to go abroad?

**Alexandra Eala:** As of right now, from what I know, of the kind of level, or how, how do you say, like, what the resources, or in terms of coaching and not knowledge, or things like that, in the Philippines I frankly think it's, it's still quite far. I think we still have a gap to close. I think there's still a lot to learn for us, but I do believe we are in the right direction.

**Question:** What has surprised you the most? I mean for me to see so many Filipino and Filipina fans and the situation in Melbourne during the Australian Open, with that queue waiting to get in to your matches, but when you look through the last 12 months, is there one thing that has really surprised you with your rise and attention?

**Alexandra Eala:** Yes. Melbourne is one of the instances where it really, that really stuck out to me. I didn't realize the size of the crowd until after my match, when I had seen some videos, some clips online, and it really came as a surprise to me. But I'm so happy and so privileged that I'm able to bring that sense of community out in the people. I guess that would have to be the biggest surprise and something relatively unexpected.