

Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, FL USA

Jessica Pegula

Press Conference



Question

Hey Jess, tough one out there today. It seemed like you were really in control of the match up until she held at 3-2, that very back and forth game. Do you think the match slipped away from you? What do you think led to the result today?

Jessica Pegula

Yeah, that game where she made a couple bad errors, to me, I have to win that game with someone like her. I can't let her make that many mistakes and kind of get away with that game. But at the same time I felt like I played really well throughout the whole match. I saw a stat I won more points. That's what sucks about tennis – sometimes you can win more points and you can still lose the match. So yeah, I mean I was right there. I felt like I played really solid. She hit some really good shots on break points, especially in the third. So, yeah, it definitely would have obviously get that break at that moment. Maybe it would have been different. I don't, you know, you don't really know, but that was definitely, like a big, you know, pivotal moment, I think, in the match.

Question

Yes, I thought another big moment when it was 4-3 in the third, you were ripping the ball, return of serves. She made a couple unbelievable volleys. You even applauded on one.

Jessica Pegula

Yeah. She hit a couple really good volleys in the third. And that could have been another break

right there. So, yeah, credit to her. She, she hit some amazing shots at those points

Question

You sound very down. You really wanted this one, didn't you?

Jessica Pegula

I mean, like I said, it sucks when you feel like you're playing like, like you win more points and you lose the match. Like, what do you really tell yourself? Like, when you look at like, okay, what can I do differently? Obviously, there's some things I think I can still do differently, but, I mean, it's kind of like, I almost rather, like, just get killed, like, 2 and 2, instead of being like, Oh, you well, you played great. And, like, you served well, but, you know, and you won more points, but you lost, and that's just frustrating.

Question

Hey, Jess, like you said, well played today. What is it about Aryna and Elena that is making them so tough these days? I mean, I know they're not quite Carlos and Jannik yet, but they're pretty good last few months, and you've had particular frustration, obviously, against Elena. What have you seen in terms of the growth that they're making that's given, that's made it sort of like a big mountain for everyone else to climb?

Jessica Pegula

I mean, I feel like they're just so confident right now, in like, big pressure points. You know, like, I mean, the amount of times they go for big second serves, or they go for big returns, or

they hit a big one- two punch, like, serve first ball, like, rip a winner on a break point. Like, it takes a lot of confidence to do that, and I feel like those points, they're just playing really confident, at least when I played Aryna a lot, you know, over the last couple years, and now Elena quite a lot in the last couple months. I just always feel like that's what they do really well. Elena, to me, her serve every time I play her, I always just feel like, I mean, she had 15 aces today. Like I was looking at her other matches, and she had like, three or one or, you know, and then today, she hits 15. But maybe that's I should give myself some credit. Maybe she knows she has to serve, you know, bigger and go for her spots more, because I'm a good returner. I don't know, but I would say for her, whenever I play her, the difference to me is like the serve and first ball. Aryna as well. Their, yeah, ability to be confident with their patterns and their serve and the one-two punch, no matter what the score is, just puts a lot of pressure on, on you when you're playing against them.

Question

How do you flip the switch now to the clay court season? Getting ready, or things you work on, something, training differently? Or how do you just get ready to go and play Europe.

Jessica Pegula

I'm excited for the clay. You know, the clay last few years has been a little rough. I had a couple injuries. I think I didn't even play one year, and then last year, I lost a tough match at the French, you know, and had an injury throughout like Madrid and Rome, which really bothered me. So I'm really, actually, really excited. I think I can play some really good tennis on the clay. I always love playing in Madrid, especially. I play well in Charleston, you know, obviously. So I'm excited to kind of show the stuff that I've gotten so much better at the last six months, and kind

of translate that onto the clay. I think I've been serving really well, so I think that's going to be another big weapon that will hopefully see some better results for me.

Question

Jess, if I could ask you non-match question, and sorry to do this after a loss, but I noticed that you had an applauding emoji on a tweet today about prize money. I think a couple of other players have...

Jessica Pegula

Applauding emoji. That's where we are these days (laughing). What type of emoji did you put out?

Question

Other players have also made comments, I think, about it. Bear with me. I mean, you're talking about prize money and wanting to have things increased, certainly more at the Majors, but has consideration been given to what more the Majors are doing for the grassroots and the development of the sport where a lot of this money goes, and three of those four national associations, and Wimbledon contributes greatly to the LTA. So a lot of that money is going there, plus how many more events are played at those tournaments. So to you know to compare it to the percentages on the regular tours is that fair? And I'm not pinpointing it to you specifically, but it's across the board. And then I guess the second part of it is that if US Open in Wimbledon didn't have prize money, would you play?

Jessica Pegula

No prize money? I don't know (laughs). No, I think, no. I think that's a fair question. But I think that's why we're kind of at the point of, well, we want to ask if this is, like, can we do this? Because, I mean, first of all, you don't

(inaudible), unless you ask if, unless you try, right, if you push for some sort of change. Obviously, we've seen that in the past within our sport. You know, sometimes you have to fight for what you think is right, but it's, it's about the percentage of prize money more so just because we've seen how much more money they have made. I mean, they're making US Open is making so much money, I think it's one of the highest grossing, if not the highest grossing sporting event in the world. And just to not, I mean, fair enough last year they did increase some of the prize money more to the top, wasn't really exactly what we wanted, but at least it shows that they're somewhat aware of increasing that. And I think we just want the ecosystem of our sport to continue to be sustainable for all players. And you know, we see the tours give a lot back to player welfare to make that sustainable for our players, and they just we don't see that from them. And I think as we, this sport continues to grow, and as it's grown, as we've seen with the amazing events that they do put on that we all love to play, I think that is fair for us to ask for that to go up as they've made a lot more money, and as we've seen, whether it's through inflation or whatnot, is that the needle isn't really moving as much as it may seem, because, oh, it will, you know, it's increased so much this year, and we've increased it again this year and this year, but they're making X amount more money and more money every single year. So I think it's just balancing that out. And you know, we see that in a lot of other sports as well. So I think it's just for me again. I mean, we want more prize money, but the bottom line also is just the sustainability. I mean, we've seen a lot of these stories of lower-ranked players that they survive on a Slam paycheck for their whole year. And I think we just want to see the ecosystem of the sport continue to grow, along with how much it's been growing with the fan, with TV, and I think that's a fair question to ask, and hopefully we

can keep having that discussion with them in the future.

Question

Just curious, just as you said this, it's really tight, and you played, well, how close do you feel to kind of getting a big win over, you know, whether it's Aryna or Elena in one of these big matches, given how close you have been?

Jessica Pegula

You know I, yeah, I thought I was playing some great tennis the last couple weeks, losing to Elena again in both but, I mean, I'm putting myself right there. I'm giving myself the chances and the opportunities, and I think I've elevated my game. I've gotten better, become a better player. I think that I am definitely challenging them, both of them, and that's kind of all I can kind of ask of myself. And then hopefully, you know, some of the wins will come along, but at least I can say that, you know, I'm putting myself in a good position. And you know, even though I joked I'd rather lose 2 and 2 than maybe win a point, when a match where I won more points, I think, though, you know, deep down, it's, it's nice to know that I am improving and challenging them. And that's again, at the end of the day, that what keeps me excited about the sport and keeps me excited to keep competing, to see myself get better and challenge them. And I mean, they've been the best in the world. I can't be upset that I'm losing to, like, the two best players in the world. You know, I think that's, people may rag on, Oh, what do you have to do to beat them? Or, you know, why haven't you beaten them? But at the same time, it's like when I don't know, in the past, when I always laugh at stats of girls losing to Serena. I'm like, well, it's better they're losing to Serena than some maybe some other random players that they feel like they shouldn't have lost to. So again, I think I'm putting myself in position to challenge the best players in the

world and become a better player. So I'm happy with that.