

# Citi Open

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Washington D.C.

## Jessica Pegula

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to D.C. How does it feel to return to the Citi Open?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it's super exciting. I'm glad I finally got to defend the title I guess in a way. But, yeah, a lot of great memories here so I'm super excited to be back and happy to have the women's event back in D.C.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. What did that win do for you? It was a little bit of a springboard. You were trending in the right direction, but really since then you've taken it to another level. What did that do for you, that week?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, I think it kind of speaks for itself. Obviously have done very well since then. It was a huge breakthrough for me, just winning actually my only pro title. Even on the ITF tour I lost in quite a few finals. It was kind of getting the monkey off my back and giving me a big confidence boost.

Yeah, it was a huge, huge moment for me, being my only title. But kind of catapulted me into a lot of confidence to get a lot more success. So it was a big moment for me.

**Q. Was that the first week you worked with David?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it was the first week. We trained together for about four days back in Florida. We used this week as a trial week kind of just to see how it went. Yeah, couldn't be any better, I guess. So it was a good thing. We've been together ever since, so it's good.

**Q. We followed your progress on the tour. When it came to pro tennis, nothing came easy to you. The Washington title, was it the confidence building or was there more? You've obviously progressed. You weren't the phenom at 17 that everyone was talking about. Here you are today. Some of them we don't remember any more. Was it the confidence that this is doable on a regular basis?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I think it just gave me

confidence that I can be at this level and win at this level, perform at this level day in and day out.

Obviously I had to go through a lot more challenges after that tournament. Then it was playing the bigger events. Then it was doing better at Grand Slams. Trying to get that consistency. This was definitely a steppingstone to that. I think it was one of the earlier stepping stones of establishing myself on tour, establishing myself as someone who could win these tournaments.

Of course, there's someone usually every week winning these tournaments, but I think I used it in a good way to build even more on top of that. I think that was really important, was that after I won this event, I still had a lot more challenges I had to go through.

I was able to use this as a really kind of learning experience as well as confidence, take that with me to the next level.

**Q. During COVID, you trained, participated in World TeamTennis. Do you think that made a difference?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Oh, yeah, it made a huge difference. I think in COVID I kind of just committed. There were so many unknowns. I was like, Okay, whenever we're back, I'm going to be ready for it, I'm going to be in shape and ready to go.

I think some girls used that time to relax because they haven't had time to have a break on tour. That's totally fine. Like, I think either way is good, whatever you want to do. For me it was, like, you know what, I'm ready to go. I want to come back winning.

I knew people would be maybe not as excited or they don't want to be there because of all the rules, COVID, there's no fans. I think I just made the decision, like, I'm not going to let any of that other stuff bother me, and I'm going to use it to my advantage. There's no fans here, I'm just going to play like there is fans here, I'm going to be the same. I think I just had that mindset from the get-go.

Playing World TeamTennis was a huge blessing because I



got to obviously get the match play in before tournaments, get some confidence playing on a team, pressure situations. I think it was like a perfect almost training block for me.

Fortunately I was able to train obviously during that time. Being in Florida, we're very lucky. I know some other people in other countries, it wasn't as accessible. I didn't want to take that for granted so I used it to my advantage and it helped a lot.

**Q. It's been three years since you won your first title here. Is there anything that you can point to in the past three years that has enabled you to advance your career as well as you have? What will it take to be able to maintain the success?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I've gone through a lot of challenges. Obviously I think being healthy is huge, especially in today's game. I think the game is improving so quickly every week, I feel like everyone's always getting better and the level's getting higher.

Really, like, taking care of my body very seriously because I've been through a lot of bad injuries and I know what it's like. You can see when girls get hurt, they're out for three to six months or something, it's really difficult to come back. It's not that easy. The level just keeps kind of growing and you're playing catch-up more or less.

To me, I don't want to do that. Like I said, I'm not 17. I'm not old, I'm 28, so I don't want to really want to waste any time doing that. I already did enough of that.

Health has definitely been, like, the main priority I'd say, just coming from all my injuries. That in itself gives me a lot of confidence, it gives me the ability to go out and perform and train at my best every single day. I think that starts to add up after a long period of time.

Me being able to keep that consistency just gives me confidence. It kind of just goes all together. Like I said, it's like building blocks. Throughout the year there's been times where obviously mentally you're really tired and stuff like that. I don't know, I think I've just been able to, I don't know, embrace the grind of every single day and really enjoy it. Yeah, I think that's just helped a lot the last three years.

There's been a lot of ups and downs, but it's been good more or less.

**Q. I think you're No. 4 in the race currently, which is pretty great.**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah.

**Q. Do you have any sense of where that race might be leading to in terms of where the Finals are going to be?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Has the Finals been decided? No.

**Q. I didn't know if you knew as a council person.**

JESSICA PEGULA: No, I don't (laughter).

**Q. In terms of your consistency, it's been a tough year, a lot of struggles for a lot of players that started in the top 10. What do you chalk that up to? Why has what you've been able to do so elusive to so many people this year?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I don't know why. I don't know. I think I've just had a good attitude I feel like every week. Like, I keep my team pretty small and I try to keep the routines the same and I try to keep the base of everything kind of the same without kind of getting too big and maybe getting overwhelmed. I don't know if that makes a difference.

I don't know, I think I've just been able to stick to what I found works. Even though I want to get better and I'm always trying new things, I feel like I don't get too far the other way where I want to change a bunch of things. Like, Oh, no, I need to be top 10. Well, I need to hire this person, do this different, change this, change that.

I think sometimes I kind of get to that mindset. I'm like, Okay, this has been working, let's just slowly keep climbing instead of trying to get a quick fix, how can I do this, how can I do that better.

I think that and, again, being healthy. That's just, again, the biggest thing right now in the women's game. The level is just so good day in and day out. If you can stay healthy and you can play every week and keep giving yourself opportunities, that's huge, so...

I don't know. Combination of those things.

**Q. Wondering if being the top-ranked American woman was the goal you had for yourself? What's the significance of that to you?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, it's pretty crazy. I guess it was a goal, but at the same time I think my goal every week is just to, like, I'm always working on things and getting better. I'm always focusing on that.

I think I always knew that the other stuff will come along, those goals. As far as breaking the top 20, then top 15, top 10, now the No. 1 ranked American, it just kind of all came with that. I don't know if I really prioritized any of that as the goal. They were just more like rewards kind of for all the hard work and the time that I've been putting in, keeping a good attitude and working hard.

Yeah, it's pretty crazy to think. It's so cool to be going into the American swing, U.S. swing, with that kind of next to my name. It's really special.

Yeah, I haven't gotten to think about it much, but it's pretty cool the more people keep asking me.

**Q. You hit the ball really flat, absorb pace well. Barty talked about how you were difficult to play. Is that just the style that you played since you were a junior or a kid? Is that something you strategically decided this is tough for the other women to play against?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it's a great question. I don't think anyone's ever asked me that before.

Yeah, I've always kind of played like that. I don't know. I think we all kind of play the same as when we were younger, it just kind of evolves over time. I think it's just how you pick up a racquet, how your timing is, who taught you your strokes. It kind of just grows from there. Usually not much really changes from that.

No, I've always had really good timing, like really good hand-eye coordination. I've worked on trying to hit a little bit more spin at times when I need to.

Yeah, I do try to use that to my advantage as well as hitting like a flat ball. A lot of people say it kind of skids, you hit it so hard, it stays so low.

It depends on who I'm playing, but I think it's something that I do that I don't think a lot of other girls really do. They may hit hard or hit really heavy, but, yeah, I definitely kind of hit this skidding flat ball. I don't know if it's just because of my timing or what. It's just how I play.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about your first-round match. Hailey hasn't played since she last played you there in Berlin. Thoughts on that first-round matchup?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it will be super fun. I know she's from here. Hopefully we get a really good crowd. I think that will be exciting.

I know she got hurt at the French. It will be interesting to see how she's doing. She's so talented, unbelievable

athlete, really nice girl. I get along with her really well, always cheering for her.

I've seen her get hurt a lot. I hope she can kind of find some time to really kind of evolve her game more because I think she's got a great game. Again, really, really talented.

It will be tough. I know she'll be getting up to play me, being the higher-ranked person. I know she's going to want to play well. I'm used to people kind of lifting their level to play me. I think it will be really exciting, but I think it's a fun matchup, especially coming back to D.C. It will be fun.

**Q. You've obviously had a lot of success here. What is it about D.C. that you enjoy, what is it about the Citi Open that you enjoy?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I've always played well here. I've always had really good results here in the past. Even before I won the tournament, I had some really good wins here. Beat Sam Stosur here, which was one of my first big wins.

I don't know what it is. I don't know if it's the conditions or the courts. I think every player kind of has that one tournament, few tournaments, where they love to play.

This tournament, I've always just had good vibes here, I guess, for some reason. It's easy to get around. I think the fans are amazing. The event Mark puts on is really great. It's easy for the players, accessible. It's not overwhelming. It's easy to get to the courts, easy to practice.

I think it's just fun because it kind of kick starts the hard court summer in the U.S. That's my favorite swing, being an American. No other place to be than the nation's capital. It's great.

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