

Western & Southern Open

Thursday, August 18, 2022

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Jessica Pegula

Press Conference



J. PEGULA/E. Raducanu

7-5, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on reaching another 1000 quarterfinal. Can you just talk about how you approached the match and the win today?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. Yeah, I definitely felt like I was pretty nervous actually tonight, not really knowing -- well, knowing how she plays but not actually practicing or hitting with her. And then playing at night, conditions are heavier. Just seemed so different when I got out there.

Yeah, I'm happy with how I pulled through with that, and, yeah, I guess another quarterfinal. I feel like it's a running joke now (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You say joke; we say massive accomplishment. But you were saying you obviously watched Emma play and kind of scouted her a bit. What was the difference between what you had seen versus what it was like playing her?

JESSICA PEGULA: I actually thought, like, I thought she played well tonight. Like, it was close. It was one break. We traded breaks in the first.

I thought she was starting to raise her level in the second set, like I thought it was a lot of close points. Just a few unforced errors here and there I felt like were the games.

I thought it was a pretty high level. We were having good rallies, striking the ball well. I thought she served pretty well, maybe better than I thought.

Yeah, so I don't know. I was just trying to get a feel. I think we were both also trying to get a feel for each other, as well. That can be kind of awkward, I feel like, in the first few games.

Q. Did you feel as though given kind of what her run was to get to this stage with having beaten Serena and

Vika the way she had, was there a little bit of an extra, not motivation, but knowing that it was a bit of a marquee match maybe more than...

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, definitely having to beat Serena and Vika is not easy, even no matter how they played or Serena hasn't been doing as well, whatever. I think handling the moment like that is really difficult.

For her, I mean, she's already had success, but, yeah, for her to handle that, I think it's really hard no matter what. I don't care what you say or how you are playing or whatever. To beat both of those girls back to back is tough. And bageling them as well.

Definitely I thought she was probably playing better maybe the last couple of weeks than she maybe was earlier in the year. Yeah, and the courts are a little faster maybe, which I think also suits her.

Yeah, I think it definitely said something coming into this match, and maybe that's why I was a little extra nervous.

Q. You are the highest-ranked tennis player in this country. Playing on the big stage, you mentioned on court that you weren't feeling great. Curious how you felt during the match when you kind of let go and played.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I think just getting used to the conditions, it was definitely heavier out there. The screen behind the court is always hard to deal with at first, playing against someone I haven't hit with before, those types of elements. And also nerves, because it's for another quarterfinal, another chance to do well. I know that she's been playing pretty well the first two rounds. There was a lot of things. I think that's normal. I think it happens every tournament if you are not feeling that at some point.

You know, yesterday I wasn't nervous at all, and I felt amazing. So it's just day to day. You never know how you are going to feel.

When I broke early, I think I was up 40-15 that game, ended up losing that game, I definitely got a little annoyed

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

with myself because I got an early break and I wanted to solidify that.

So I think once I got the first set, I think the nerves let go a little bit. But I thought she played really well in the second set as well, and the pressure was on until the last point. It definitely didn't go away.

Q. What are the most impactful things about her game? What are her strengths for you?

JESSICA PEGULA: I thought she moved really well, and I thought she served really well, first and second serve. It wasn't that easy for me to really attack her second serve. She was doing a good job of hitting a lot of body serves and hitting her spots really well on her first serves.

I think that and her movement, I think she's pretty athletic out there, gets a lot of balls back, changes direction of the ball pretty well as well. Yeah, she has a lot of stuff. She has so much time to improve on so many things, and I'm sure she's going to constantly be working on that.

Yeah, I think her strengths were definitely maybe her serve tonight surprised me a bit.

Q. I just wanted to ask something about your coach. What kind of coach is he?

JESSICA PEGULA: My coach, David Witt, he's very laid back, very funny. A lot of comments, a lot of funny comments, a lot of lines, one-liners that he likes to use. But, no, he's been great.

Again, very laid back but also really competitive. I always laugh, like, doesn't matter if it's Ping-Pong or bowling or like those Pop-A-Shot, like he's good at everything and it kind of annoys me.

He's interesting, really competitive, but I think pretty laid back, kind of has like a silent confidence about him. I think that's helped me a lot, because I think similar personality, I'm pretty laid back as well.

I think him being confident has kind of allowed me to be, Okay, I can be laid back, but I can also be very confident and want to win. I think that's maybe something I struggled with personality-wise early on in my career. I wasn't quite sure, I think, how to act on the court.

Q. Is there a one-liner you could share?

JESSICA PEGULA: Oh, God, you don't want to hear his one-liners. They are interesting. Thank God he's not mic'd up anywhere. They are pretty funny. He keeps it

entertaining.

It's like one of those things where I don't know if I could give you one off the top of my head. I'd have to think about it. But there are a lot of them.

Q. You are obviously top 10, top-ranked American, back-to-back quarterfinals. A match away from back-to-back semis, and the US Open is right around the corner. Do you still feel under the radar? All the numbers say a certain thing about your tennis and your quality, but kind of how do you react to that and conceptualize that?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I feel like I am under the radar a little bit. I feel like a lot of people don't know me or don't care that I'm the No. 1 ranked American. Oh, whatever. She's kind of boring (smiling).

I don't know. But I kind of like it that way as well. Listen, I know I'm not 18 and a phenom, and I know that I haven't actually won any big titles yet, but I just think my journey was a lot different. I hope it inspires people to know that even if maybe you are a little older, maybe people kind of think you missed your window or you are not really going to improve, that you can always improve and you can always get better.

I think I'm just a perfect example of that. I don't mind being under the radar. I don't necessarily want extra attention. I'm fine with it. Yeah, I know my story is not the one people really want to root for. I'm kind of, like, it's fine. I will just be here and try to keep winning and doing my thing. Yeah, I think I like it that way.

Q. Why do you think people don't want to root for your story?

JESSICA PEGULA: No, I just mean like with my family and stuff, you know, I know I was more privileged than other people, and I'm aware of that. I try to be very down-to-earth, and I think I am.

Yeah, I know that's maybe not the story people gravitate towards, right? They may think it's interesting. I know some people do, but, yeah, I'm aware of that and I know that.

I also think I have a lot of people's respect as well. I think it's kind of known at least on tour and with players that, yeah, I have that respect. But again, it's kind of under the radar. So I don't know. Maybe that's just me, I guess.

Q. Laid back and all that sort of stuff?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah.

Q. When we spoke in Toronto, there was a kind of a lot of, Yeah, let's see how these next few weeks go. Don't know where the game is. Having done what you did in Toronto, both in singles and doubles and then now, being back in the quarterfinals here, how are you feeling?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I feel really good. I mean, again, it's just day by day. It's just like trying to win matches literally every day. I mean, I'm happy. I have been winning matches. It's always great going in to the US Open regardless of what happens tomorrow. Super happy with how I'm playing, and I think I'm putting myself in good position to do well there. I think that's important.

But again, I think like I told you, every week is so different. Yeah, it's week to week, day to day type of thing. I try my best to at least use the momentum from Toronto and here to go into the US Open. But, you know, the job is not finished here, so hopefully I can keep winning here and do well.

Q. I think part of your success has been how kind of well balanced you are with your groundstrokes. At this point of your career, what's your favorite groundstroke?

JESSICA PEGULA: I guess like my backhand is probably more solid, but, I mean, when I'm hitting my forehand well, I like my forehand a lot because I can do a lot with it.

But I don't know. Honestly depends on the day. Literally some weeks -- yesterday I felt like I was hitting my forehand amazing. Today I was kind of, like, eh, felt like my backhand felt a little bit better.

I don't know. I don't think I have a preference too much, but maybe my backhand. I will just say my backhand. My backhand down the line when it's on, I guess.

Q. Wondering what you think about the US Open balls.

JESSICA PEGULA: US Open balls?

Q. Yeah, the Wilson balls.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I heard Iga talking about that. I'm not a fan of them either. Honestly, I don't think a lot of the girls are, like she said.

It's not great, especially when like earlier in the year, I think we were in Dubai, and it was like at this one random week that we were playing with them on a really, a really dry

location in Dubai on really fast courts. Everyone was, like, losing it. Like in practice -- I think Ons beat me 2 and 0 or something there. I couldn't get the hang of it.

So I think when it's put in that position, it's definitely hard when it's kind of just a random week thrown into the calendar. You're, like, Why are we switching to these balls?

I'm on the player council, so hopefully we can get something together and maybe make it more consistent. I think through this series at least we are playing with the same ball every week. In D.C. I remember I used to play I think with Penn balls, and then I'd come to the rest of the tournaments and it would be Wilson.

At least now they are all the Wilson Regular Duty, I'm personally not a huge fan. I don't see why we couldn't switch to Extra Duty. But it's easier said than done, so hopefully the player council can work on that (smiling).

Q. (Off mic.)

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, of course. I played with them when I'm at home or when I can't find any balls or we don't know. They just don't fly as much.

I think it's also why you see a lot of double faults starting on the hard court season, especially coming from Wimbledon where we play with the Slazengers and they are so heavy. I feel like the first couple weeks there are a lot of double faults, because the balls are just kind of flying a bit more.

Q. Looking ahead to Caroline Garcia, she beat you the start of the year and she's on a bit of a tear recently. What are your thoughts on that? What makes her such a dangerous opponent?

JESSICA PEGULA: Well, again, I think she's someone that no one really wants to play, because again, she hits the ball really hard, serves really well.

Super powerful. Has big groundstrokes and kind of takes the racquet out of your hands sometimes. Hard to play when you can't get a rhythm.

You know, it's a little, yeah, not easy playing her, especially when she's been on a tear, like you said. She's really done well the last couple months, which is nice to see, because obviously she was at the top of the game for a while too.

I think as well as that, a lot of underrated experience, too. I don't think the moment is really going to get to her. She's been in these positions before, as well.

Yeah, tougher match than I think people will talk about or give credit to, but she's been playing really well. It will be a tough match. We will see how it goes.

Q. Under the radar?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. That's the way to do it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

