

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Thursday, 13 May 2021

Roma, Italia

Jessica Pegula

Press Conference

J. PEGULA/E. Alexandrova

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Talk through the match. What did you think was the key today?

JESSICA PEGULA: I thought I just played really solid the first set. I didn't make a lot of errors. I think she was, I don't know, kind of making a lot of errors, I didn't have to do much. Got up an early break in the third, but she started to play a lot better, which is expected with a big player like her, hitting some winners.

I felt like I needed to step in a little bit more, be more aggressive, start serving better to close out the second. Glad I did because she was starting to play pretty well there in the second. Wasn't in trouble, but definitely one of those where I had to close it out or she could really start kind of taking over the match.

Q. Do you feel the confidence you're gaining with every match on clay, now quarterfinals of another 1000, do you find that confidence is stemming from how well you're generally playing this season or I got this great win in individual matches?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, I think it's both. I think I'm just playing smarter, playing better, doing everything a little bit better maybe than I was. I mean, I think just my awareness out there is so much better, whereas before, I don't know, maybe I'd just get too frustrated or I didn't quite understand what I was doing to win or lose the match, what was happening. I think it's just really my awareness out there, being able to figure things out a lot better.

Yeah, obviously I think I'm better than I was two years ago just in general. Again, taking confidence from those wins, yeah, definitely really helps no matter what. It's always going to help confidence. Yeah, I think it's a combination of the two of those things. Definitely my court awareness is much better than it used to be.



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Q. Do you feel with respect to the court awareness, with your peers you probably have less European clay court experience, at what point do you feel your court awareness changed in terms of how you wanted to play your game on clay?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I think after Madrid honestly, Sabalenka killed me, and I was kind of, you know... What it was weird, I didn't realize till after the match, but my coach was saying she was standing really far back. She was obviously still playing really aggressive. Usually I'm trying to step in a little bit more, take the ball early, look to come in. I think with clay I realized with the bad bounces, the lines, it's not really a true bounce all the time, that I can stand back a little bit and still play aggressive, just kind of adjust my margins.

I think that's something we adjusted coming into Rome, which is it perfectly how I want to play? Not really. I think it's working. I'm still trying to stay aggressive and hit out. I'm just kind of giving myself a little bit more time if there's a bad bounce, I'm not timing the ball well on the clay.

I'm never really going to be like a true clay-courter. I still think I can do well on the surface given my game. Gives me a lot of time to set up for my shots, which I like.

Yeah, I think it's a mindset and a couple strategic things that we've adjusted.

Q. Are you enjoying the challenge of it?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, especially this week I came in here, Madrid I still thought I was hitting the ball well. It was, yeah, it's a challenge this week, let's move back a little bit, change that aspect, see what happens. It's been helping.

Yeah, I definitely like to think of it as a challenge because it makes it more fun for me. I think it's also good, I'm trying to do something different. I'm not doing the same thing over and over again, like they say, expecting a different result, which maybe I would have done a couple years ago. Now I'm looking at it, what if we try this, do this. I think that's really helped.

Q. With all of these top-level quarterfinals you've been making since the restart, I assume two years ago a



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result like this, or results in Cincinnati, seemed far away, maybe it didn't. Now that you've done it repeatedly, how different do you see this result?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I guess I just feel like I've been here before. It doesn't feel as big of a deal, even though it's still a good tournament, a good thing to have. It doesn't feel, I don't know, as I guess anxious kind of nervy feeling. It's more that I've been here before, I knew I could get here.

Yeah, I mean, it's funny because a lot of those 1000s, where my ranking was, the draws are maybe smaller, I didn't get in them. I was playing quallies. Miami, I think last year was the first year, the year before the COVID, was the first year I played it because I can never get in. I always got in quallies of Indian Wells or something like that, but I never got to in Miami.

Even Doha, Dubai, I never went because I was always going to be in quallies, it's kind of far. It's kind of funny a lot of these are my first time playing the tournaments which is keeping it exciting as a new thing for me. It will be interesting next year when I have to play them again or it becomes more monotonous, too much familiarity there, it might be different. To me it's almost like a new experience which makes it exciting for me because a lot of them I haven't even gotten to play.

Yeah, it's a different experience, but I think it just feels like a normal tournament to me. Every tournament feels the same. It doesn't feel different. Even Grand Slams. I think I'm calmed more down where before I would be maybe too anxious to kind of play. I guess I feel settled is kind of the word I'm looking for.

Q. It looks like you'll play Martic. What do you make of that matchup?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, she's tough on clay. I've played her on clay in Charleston a while ago. I think I lost in three sets. I know it's always going to be a tough match. I think she likes the clay. She's won a couple good matches here, some tough matches, which can give you confidence. Especially three-setters. Sometimes it's tough playing someone who feels like no matter what they can turn the match around and win that match.

Yeah, I think it's going to be tough. Think she'll definitely probably be the most clay court type of player I've played so far this week. I think it's going to be a challenge. Hopefully I can just go out there and keep playing like I have been.

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