

# Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

## Taylor Townsend

Press Conference



INTERNAZIONALI  
BNL D'ITALIA

BNP PARIBAS

T. TOWNSEND/J. Pegula

6-2, 3-6, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: How do you feel?

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: I feel great. This has been super exciting. Really great day. I think I haven't really processed fully.

But I'm just really proud of myself. I've been working really hard over the past couple of years to come back. Moments like these are what it's all about. Two years ago, a year ago, when I started back in April, I had these types of moments in my mind where I wanted to be in these types of situations.

To be here and to be able to come through and play the way that I did, it really means a lot.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You said you were looking forward to this moment. Does it make sense that now is the time that a match like this happened?**

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: I think so. I mean, I personally don't believe in accidents. I've had several very close matches against seeded players. I played a great match against Alexandrova in Australian Open. I've played against top players.

But it's all led up to a moment like this. So the lessons that I took from those matches, the losses, the ups and the downs have really kind of prepared me for this moment.

Honestly I just try to go out there and just play. I came in understanding that, like, I really didn't have anything to lose. Just to play free. I really had so much fun out there. It was really great just to be able to play that way from start to finish.

**Q. What does it feel like to call yourself a top 10 doubles player? How has your doubles success helped your singles?**

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Doubles has always been super important for me and for my game. I've always enjoyed playing. It really complements the style of play that I have. It's been really helpful because in the weeks where I haven't been in the singles and I've progressed through two weeks of doubles, having consistent match play, consistent practice every day, getting a chance to continue to be on-site and just kind of get used to the conditions, have day in and day out, it's been incredibly helpful.

Every time I step out on the court, it's an opportunity for me to get better at something. That's the mindset for me and my team. It doesn't matter whether it's singles or doubles, we have an objective we're going into the matches with.

I felt like it's been hugely helpful for me to continue to play and to make those strides and to gain confidence, to be across the net from people like Jess, Coco in finals, in semifinals of 1000s, playing against Azarenka, Bea, people who are at the top of the game, who have been at the top of the game. It's experience.

For me, I don't categorize it in one way or the other, it's singles or doubles. I think it transfers equally. It's about that time on court.

**Q. You said you're still processing the win today. Maybe you can say something about how you actually pulled it off. What did you do well?**

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: I think from start to finish, I just played free. I trusted my training. That was the biggest thing that my coach and I talked about prior to the match. We said, Look, you've done the work, you've done the training, you've put in the time, the hours, done the hard work. Trust it and just go play. Go have fun and go play. Get out of your own way (smiling).

Honestly, I took that and I was just like, Yeah, going into the match, it was more a belief in the match, trusting the work that I've put in, knowing it's enough, not that I had to do something extraordinary or extra to win points and games and sets against someone who is No. 3 in the

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world. Jess has proven herself to be a top player. She's been so consistent for the last almost two years, has really solidified herself at the top of the game in both singles and doubles.

For me, I just went out and tried to do what I do and what I've been training more and it worked.

**Q. You've always played your own schedule. Obviously played a lot in the States. What has it been like playing these tournaments in Europe, taking on a fuller schedule?**

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: It's been great. One of the things that when you're on tour, you kind of have the mundane schedule or you play the same tournaments. Once you hit a certain ranking bracket, you're playing kind of the same events every year.

For me it was incredibly exciting for me to be able to come to tournaments I've never been to, places I've never been to. I was out walking around the streets of Madrid every day after my matches and practices. Equally the same here. It's really kind of exciting because, like, it's new. I'm exploring different places, doing different things I've never done. It's really quite fun.

I'm glad that I did it. I was talking to someone. I've done the training and playing the tournaments in the States. I've done that before. I've had success. I've proven myself on that level. I know that in order for me to continue to put myself in these situations, I have to play these tournaments, I have to play against the top players, I have to be in these draws. You have to do it the hard way, whether it be qualifying into these tournaments, whether it be qualifying into the slams. It's just the path that I have to take in order for me to continue to get the experience on this level.

I've really embraced that and understood that, like, this is just the road. It's no secret. Anybody who has made these jumps and these elevations have gone from level to level. It's just something that I've embraced.

I'm enjoying it. It's been great just to show and prove to myself week in, week out, no matter if it's on the singles or doubles court, that I belong at this level.

**Q. You hugged your coach after the match. It seemed like there was some emotion going on there. Can you talk through a little bit about why.**

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Yeah, we've had some really deep conversations. Again, it was kind of the same feeling I had when I found out that was, like, top five in the world in

doubles. I just thought about the journey.

Like I said, when I started, I mean, just to think that I've been back on tour for 13 months, and to be here and to think about the leaps and the bounds that I've taken just to get here, it hasn't been easy. It's been very, very challenging. Some of the hardest - the hardest work I've ever done in my life honestly. But these types of moments really make it worth it.

More than anything, it was more so of just believing. Seeing that it happened and then believing and understanding and knowing, like, I really, truly belong here. It's not an accident, not a fluke, not a one off. I really I truly believe this is the level.

I displayed I think in this match from start to finish. Again, Jess has really been so consistent and so, so good over basically the past two years. I have a tremendous amount of respect for her and the evolution and climb that she's made in her career, to not only get here but to stay. That's the hardest part, that's the tough part about this sport, you can have a great year. If you don't do the same or better, you drop off.

To be able to maintain this level year in and year out is really something admirable.

It was just a moment of pure honest joy and gratitude because I've worked my ass off to be here.

**Q. On Jess, I assume you toiled on the ITFs together. Now to track both of your journeys to this place, can you talk about the Jessica Pegula that might be different than the one we know.**

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Yeah, I think it's so unique because everybody's journey is so different. Actually I thought about it when I heard I was playing her yesterday. I was like, Man, the last time I played Jess, we were in South Carolina in a 2500, who knows where. That was the last time we played each other in singles.

She's one of the people that I played doubles with her, I don't even know what year it was, 2013 or something, we made the round of 16. I really liked her so much. It was funny because I was like, You're the nicest rich person I've ever met (smiling). It was hilarious.

She was like, That's how I knew I liked you.

That's how our relationship started. It's great to kind of track with these types of players, then to see them take such leaps and bounds. Sometimes it sucks when you see you're not doing the same. That's a trap, you can't

compare yourself.

I knew whenever my time is, it will happen. But it's been really great to see Jess, Coco, Madison, Alycia, all of these girls doing so well. To be able to step away from the game when I was away, to see the successes that they've had, then to come back and be able to compete against them, it's really an honor to be amongst this group.

I have so much respect for Jess because of the road she's taken. It hasn't been an easy one. We were grinding 2500s. She didn't take the easy way. She didn't skip steps. So it's a reason that she's here. It's a reason that she's having the success that she has.

I have so much respect for people like that because you do the dirty work to get to the shiny thing. I really have a lot of respect for that.

**Q. You talked a few times about belonging here. Was that something that you ever had to prove to yourself, overcome?**

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Yeah, it's been something that I've kind of toggled with back and forth throughout my career. It's been here, there. It's been that back and forth, kind of that self-belief is always something I've struggled with because I've always had to kind of prove it to myself.

Really the main thing is I know that I've done the work in order to be here today. I think that more than anything, I can stand on that and I know that the training, the hours on court, the sweat, the tears and everything that I've put in to get here, it's no accident.

Like I said, I didn't know when my moment, quote, unquote, would come, I didn't know when this would happen. I believed it would.

I'm honestly really happy. But I'm not done. This is another step of my journey. I'm going to go back, analyze what I did well, what I can do better. I'm hitting the practice court in the morning to get ready for my next match. Kind of turning the page. I'm not content. I'm not going to settle here. I feel like I can continue on this level and do even better.

Of course I'm going to acknowledge this one and be incredibly proud of myself, but I want to continue on this journey. I'm not content.

**Q. On this journey, the belief you've had, was there in that period of all the work that you put in a moment where you doubted this was going to happen?**

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: Absolutely.

**Q. It's not like you were sure you were going to do it?**

TAYLOR TOWNSEND: The one thing that I said, which is why if you've seen any of my Instagram posts, it's continuously like hash tags of back and better than ever or I never left.

When I found out I was pregnant, I was gone for over 18 months. I said to my team, my coach, I'm not coming back unless I'm ready to win. I said, I'm not coming back unless I'm going to win or if I'm better than I was when I left. That was the precedent and goal I set for myself. That was the goal I had set for my team.

I couldn't come back the same. I had to level up. It was a lot of hard work. I mean, it wasn't really the fact of do I think this is going to happen, because I knew I was doing the right type of work. It just was a matter of when things are going to click in here (smiling). You can do all of the stuff on the outside, be strong and fit, but if this is messed up. That's the crazy thing about tennis, it's so mental.

It's been an accumulation of day in and day out working at it. It's really quite satisfying to see the hard work come to fruition.

Again, it's just another step, another brick that I'm laying on my path. I'm going to keep going and keep laying these bricks. I'm really excited this happened. I'm very grateful for this moment. I'm going to keep it going.

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