

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

Jessica Pegula

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: What are your thoughts on being in Rome?

JESSICA PEGULA: Ready to get going tomorrow on the clay, hopefully get some good matches here and feel comfortable on the clay and continue to have a good season. Just taking it one day at a time.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You didn't play clay last year pretty much at all. When you come into a situation like that, I don't know if you know you've come into a situation like that before, but is it like a huge opportunity to grab points? Is it something of a free hit? Does it take pressure off in any way? Does it mess with your mind in some sense?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it's kind of weird because I remember when I skipped this last year, there's so much pressure to perform at the end of the year. I remember I wanted to try still make Finals. Missing so many events, it was going to be tough.

Obviously I end up going on a crazy run in the summer. That kind of ends. You're like, I'm going to have to defend that next year. Then you have this swing where I have nothing to defend.

Kind of you go back and forth where you're like, I hope I can make up some ground to protect myself for the end of the year. That also puts pressure on you to do well because you know you have nothing to defend.

You can look at it in so many different ways. In tennis if you're defending every week, that's a good problem to have. That means you've been playing some good tennis. So it just kind of depends how you look at it.

I think for me, I'm just excited because I missed all of these events, I missed playing a slam, I missed the French. At the same time I haven't been here in two years. It feels like I was just here. Oh, my gosh, it feels like I was just here and I didn't even play last year.



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It's crazy how your mind goes through all these different kind of scenarios where it flies by but it's been two years, it's been a while since I had a full clay season, stuff like that.

But trying this year obviously to just take advantage of it as much as I can. On the bright side of it, I'm not trying to put too much pressure on myself, just treating it as any other swing.

Q. Last year when you did miss this period, you performed so well in the summer, did that teach you or tell you that no matter what happens, you're good, you'll find your level at some point?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, definitely it taught me that for sure because I played so many matches for a couple years there. Having time made me kind of anxious as to whether I was able to come back and still play at a high level.

I didn't have a good start to the year last year really, even in Australia. I was already kind of stressed. Missing the Middle East swing. Ended up missing clay. It was just a lot going on.

I think originally I was kind of freaking out about it a little bit at home. There's nothing you can do. I fractured my rib, so I couldn't even train for a while. You're sitting around. You see everybody playing, getting better and winning. That can be tough.

I think, yeah, after a certain point I was, like, it shouldn't really matter that much. I'm not going to forget how to play tennis. Yeah, I was able to kind of use that in a good way to come back and win Berlin.

Even though I didn't have amazing results through the Olympics, I still felt like I was playing really well. It finally just kind of clicked once I got back on the hard.

Q. Did you watch any of Carlos Alcaraz's documentary on Netflix? How do you look back on your own experience of having your life and career being documented for a Netflix series?

JESSICA PEGULA: I did not watch it yet. I'm not sure I will, to be honest. Maybe one day. It's like too much tennis for me. I don't feel like I need to watch any of it



... when all is said, we're done.®

anymore. I'm living it. I don't need to kind of, yeah, relive the emotions.

But it was interesting with Netflix. Obviously a new experience for me. Once I kind of got to know the crew and it was consistent with the same people, you definitely feel more comfortable around them.

It's hard because you're trying to focus on your career and your game, what you need to do. At the same time I do think it's nice when people kind of let a camera crew or someone kind of in on the inside of what's going on. I think it just makes people much more relatable, which I can appreciate.

I don't know if I could ever get to that point, but I do appreciate when other athletes are able to do that, to give that kind of real insight. It gives a chance for fans to either understand or get inside his mind, just relate to things on a different level.

Even though he is obviously a massive star, he's still going through real-life things, as we all are. Sometimes I think it's really nice for fans and other people to kind of get a glimpse of the human side of athletes. We're not just robots. Doesn't matter how many Grand Slams you have.

Yeah, I don't know if I could eventually get there. You do have to give them kind of a lot of access to really see what's going on because a lot of the stuff that happens, you can't plan for it. You can't plan for them to shoot a really tough moment. We just kind of have to be there and see that.

I loved the athletes that have done it, especially the other ones in golf and F1. You can really see the emotional side of that. I think it's great for tennis.

Yeah, so maybe one day I'll watch it.

Q. At Wimbledon last year you said when two players who are the same same age play each other, it's always extra interesting. How has that happened for you? When you think of the 1994 generation, yourself, Svitolina, Jabeur who are still standing. Would you have predicted that when you were juniors?

JESSICA PEGULA: I've never really thought about that before. I just get freaked out when there's a girl, like, 10 years younger than me and I feel so old (smiling).

I think it's cool that you come up in the same age as somebody. You kind of see your careers kind of grow at the same time.

I've kind of felt that way a little bit with Ons just because we were both not really top. I don't think she was a top, top junior. We never came out supposed to be top 10 in the world. Kind of struggled with injuries, struggled with physical stuff.

I remember playing her when we were ranked about the same, somewhere in the 70s, 80s or 90s. I remember when she kind of broke out and had a couple good wins. Then I would. Kind of just to see how we both kind of moved up around the same time. I didn't know exactly she was '94. I knew we were close in age.

Yeah, seeing stuff like that, I think it is cool. You're kind of on a similar journey and path. It's cool to see that we both at one point did figure it out. Obviously there's a lot of bumps in the road either way with whatever you're trying to achieve, injuries. Every year is different.

It's pretty cool to go on that journey together. I think at the end of the day when we started out, we were ranked 80 and struggling, doing all this stuff, you can appreciate the journey that we've been on.

That's kind of the entire point of what we do. It's not always just the matches that we win, it's kind of the journey of bouncing back from those injuries, bouncing back from tough losses, still being able to play at the top of the game.

Yeah, I really appreciate those moments. I think it's really cool.

Q. With a name like Pegula, do you have connections to this country?

JESSICA PEGULA: I'm not Italian. Everyone thinks so. It's not Italian. It sounds cool in Italian, like it is, but it's not.

Q. Were you raised Catholic? Like are you paying attention?

JESSICA PEGULA: I've been learning a little bit about it. My dad's side was Catholic. I didn't really grow up Catholic, more Christian.

But no, I have one friend that is obsessed with it. She's, You've got to watch the movie. She is sending these things how it all works and happens. I'm starting to learn about it. I know that it's obviously a very big deal right now.

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