

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

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Roma, Italia

Jessica Pegula

Mixed Zone

J. PEGULA/Z. Sonmez

6-4, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What were you most pleased about today?

JESSICA PEGULA: Well, I haven't played since I lost in Madrid. I feel like sometimes with a lot of time going by, practicing a lot, I stayed over here, didn't go home, I think you're a little on edge where your game's at going into a competitive match, playing against someone who already won a round or something like that. Yeah, always tricky.

But thought I played really solid. Nothing crazy. Had kind of a tough first set and then played some good tennis in the second. Was doing everything pretty well. So just happy I was able to kind of handle maybe the first-match nerves pretty well today.

Q. (Question about the American players dinner.)

JESSICA PEGULA: So USTA kind of coordinates a dinner for all the Americans to go eat. Whoever can come, can come. I think some had matches, some were playing. We had a lot of people there.

We wanted to do a gelato video, taste test video. We were actually going to do it a few days before, we got lazy, it didn't work out. Then we were like, We should ask if anyone wants to come with us after dinner. We kind of ended up doing that.

A lot of people came with us. They wanted ice cream, gelato. They were really fun with it. It was a good video.

Q. Can I ask about the top-10 player group, then the talks of boycott, all that. Wanted to know where you stand.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, I've been part of the initiative to try and have better communication with the slams to get the prize money revenue higher, to get them involved in player welfare and pensions, all these different



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things.

I think it was great that Jannik and Aryna were both very outspoken about it. I mean, I hope we don't have to get to the point of a boycott. Obviously that is, like, an extreme measure.

I think at the end of the day the point is that something kind of has to be done. I think to see them speak out was amazing 'cause we've definitely been pushing for it as far as myself and some other players to just kind of rally the top players around this because they're the biggest voices that we have in the sport.

Yeah, so, I mean, I'm down to do whatever we need to do, as long as we're all on the same page. I think it's been awesome just to see the men and the women come together, the top players. We've never had that before.

Q. Still no response from Roland Garros or Wimbledon?

JESSICA PEGULA: Not that I know of right now, no. I think we're just going to kind of continue to talk amongst ourselves. Obviously have to be on the same page with everyone. It's hard with a lot of moving parts, different players playing, different agents, a lot of things going on with different teams.

I think that really kind of brought a lot of the top players together, to be honest, fighting this kind of initiative that we've been having going on for almost a year now I think.

Q. Are talks planned for Roland Garros?

JESSICA PEGULA: Not that I know of, no. Yeah, haven't been the most communicative. I don't know if that makes sense.

Q. Does it help being from a family that's involved in sports management, these discussions?

JESSICA PEGULA: I don't know. I think it maybe does just because I feel like I've taken on a bit of, like, a leadership role with it as far as talking to a lot of top players about it.

At the end of the day the players are the ones that have

... when all is said, we're done.®



the big voices. Again, it's been just nice to see Aryna and Jannik kind of step out. I know a lot of other players feel the same way. But to have the two No. 1s very outspoken about it, that's kind of what it takes to kind of get them to listen and to kind of be aware of what's going on.

Maybe it helps a little bit. But at the end of the day it's the players' voices. We are the ones out there playing. That really matters.

Q. (Question about the percentage of revenue in other sports.)

JESSICA PEGULA: I think it's crazy. I think it's an insane difference. Obviously they're different sports. They're run differently, of course. When you see how drastic the numbers are.

But tennis has been a very old-school sport. I think it's one of the things that needs to change. Sometimes change is good. Sometimes that means fighting for things.

I think the slams have kind of just gotten away with paying not that much because we're a very individual sport. It's hard to get players to come together. We're not on a salary where football players or basketball players, whatever, can afford not to play. I think that's also a different dynamic in that aspect.

It's going to take a lot for us to kind of come together, but I think you're already seeing that.

Q. How much of your time has this taken working with this group?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I don't know, I seem to just keep being the one. I think it's just because I'm very candid. I'm not afraid to go up to any type of player and go like, Hey, are you interested in this or not? Some players, they don't care, sometimes they're not worried about it. Sometimes there's like, Yeah, for sure, I'm 100% in.

It hasn't taken a ton of time. I definitely think I've been reaching out to players on the men's and women's side especially just to see, like, where their head's at. Being a little bit of a liaison between other people that are working on it and the players trying to get us on the same page.

Q. How much harder is it that tennis is so fragmented compared to other sports? There are four different slams and they're all very distinct.

JESSICA PEGULA: That's what makes it so hard is that our sport is super fragmented. Hard to get everybody on the same page.

At the end of the day you want to play, earn your money, get your results, all that stuff. Again, it's hard. That's why it's been huge to actually have the top 10 men and women kind of really actually come together. It's been huge.

I'm hoping that will kind of get the slams' attention. I think it's going to take even more because of that reason, with it being so separate.

Q. The Italian Tennis Federation came out with a very supportive statement for the players. Does that matter in terms of having the support of other tournaments in addition to the players or...

JESSICA PEGULA: I think all support is great. I think especially for them, they have so many like Italian players, top men and women, obviously Jannik himself, Jasmine, who has done amazing over the last couple years. Tennis is really growing here. I think that definitely says a lot.

I think we would take as much support as we can get, for sure.

Q. This is about childhood coaches. Do you think the childhood coaches are the unsung heroes of shaping the future of the pros? Is there one you would give a shout-out to?

JESSICA PEGULA: My childhood coach Billy Stearns. I went to the Smith Stearns Tennis Academy. Billy was the one that taught me my strokes. I think that is such a key fundamental thing because you're pretty much stuck with your strokes at a certain point for a very long time.

I think technique-wise I can't be much better. I think people always tell me that the way I hit, my strokes, everything is very smooth. There's nothing crazy wrong technically. There never really was growing up.

So I think I definitely credit him to setting that foundation. I think it's really, really important because it really does set the base for a player to evolve their game around.

Q. Do you think those guys don't get the credit they deserve?

JESSICA PEGULA: Probably not. But I don't know, I think those types of people, too, they're not necessarily looking for credit. I think that's why they're working with young kids, to build a nice base for them, to help them become and develop into a player. I think if they wanted more credit, maybe they'd be coaching older pros, going on tour and traveling more.

Yeah, I don't think that's really in their interest. That's probably why they are good at what they do.

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Q. Is it a different skill set?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it is. I don't know if I could coach young kids. Some people like coaching a different level: some like adults, some like juniors, some like pros. I think it just depends on what you find joy in with coaching.

Q. You said the boycott is an extreme measure. Everyone is focused on trying to win matches, their careers. Do you think it's realistic that players would actually take that step?

JESSICA PEGULA: I think there's different ways you could do it. Do I really think like nobody's going to play in the top 100? I don't know if that's realistic to say that. But anything is possible. I think there's definitely other ways you could send a message, for sure. I wouldn't rule it out. Obviously it's more of an extreme measure if we're talking about it like that.

Q. Thoughts on Kathy Rinaldi stepping down? You all really adore her. What do you make of her tenure in the position? What do you think is going to be missed?

JESSICA PEGULA: Kathy, yeah, has been a staple for American tennis. I was lucky enough to play under her on BJK Cup as our captain. She was my captain the whole time. Obviously has been in and out of my young career, junior career, going through pros. She's always been there, always been someone you can talk to, call on for anything that you need. Always has so much positive, good energy. Feisty as can be.

Yeah, we've always appreciated her unwavering support not only for all of us but for American tennis. Yeah, it's sad to see her go, but I'm hoping that the next step in what she's doing, she is going to enjoy that. A little bit of change of pace.

I know she likes being in south Florida. I think she's coming back to West Palm Beach, where she used to be. It will be interesting. I'm sure she'll still be around. It's Kathy. I doubt she's going to go away.

Wishing her nothing but the best. I was giving her a few days before I reached out to her because I know she's probably super emotional about it.

Yeah, I'm excited for her for her next steps. I think it will be a nice change for her.