

WTA Finals

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Cancun, Mexico

Jessica Pegula

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Jess, welcome to Cancun. Talk about how much you're enjoying being here so far and what you're looking forward to at the WTA Finals this year.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I'm just really excited to be here, excited to get the week going. Again, it's an honor to be here from all the hard work we put in this year for all the girls.

It's just, I don't know, a nice reward from all the hard work and the long year. It can be very stressful. I'm just happy that I'm here and I made it. Hopefully I can have a better run than I did last year.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. You and Coco are the players that qualify for the second year in singles and doubles. What does this mean to you?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I guess we didn't really think much of it. I don't know. I think we're realizing that it is pretty cool, a pretty big deal, and very special to qualify in both back-to-back years. It's not something most players get to do.

Yeah, again, I think it's really, really super special for us. It just, again, shows how we've been using the momentum from singles and doubles to really have a great year and win tournaments and stuff like that.

Yeah, again, it's just another reward for having a great year. We have a lot of fun playing together, so it's nice to see all the hard work pay off.

Q. You referenced Fort Worth last year. You've had some time to think about it. What do you think happened with you and Coco in your first time there? How are you approaching it this year?

JESSICA PEGULA: I think we feel better this year. I think last year we were really burnt out. It was probably an accumulation of doing a lot with singles and doubles, coming up along the end of the year, having a good year,

but sometimes you're not used to having that consistent, full year. At the end of the year you're kind of tired.

At least for me, I was really worn out after Guadalajara. I felt like playing Guadalajara, I didn't really want to play. I kind of pushed through it, ended up being a great week for me. At the same time I think, yeah, I kind of was running on empty.

Hopefully this year I think I have mentally prepared myself a little bit better on what to expect coming in here. Now that it's not being my first finals, I kind of know what to expect, I know what's going to happen. Hopefully I can use that as better preparation this year mentally and physically and, yeah, have some better results.

Q. A question about Seoul, the week you had there. Does it feel different or does the preparation or what it's like throughout the week feel different when you have this target in your mind of I really want to win this tournament? When you have that little extra something, did you feel any of that in Seoul?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I think in Seoul, as well, as like the other higher ranked players dropped, the pressure became more and more. Okay, I really, really have a good shot to win this, at least on paper. Obviously it's different when you go out there and play.

Yeah, I definitely wanted to win it. It's different, yeah. We want to win every single week, but when a week seems a little more special, you maybe put a little more pressure on yourself.

Like I said, after seeing Ostapenko losing, Sonia losing, Alexandrova losing, it became more apparent that it was a really good time for me to win it. At the same time you don't want to think like that.

Yeah, it just comes to really having to focus one match at a time even more so than usual. I think using the positive energy from like the fans and all the support that I got there also really helped. Especially in any tough match or any tough situation, instead of getting so down on yourself, you want to try to use the positive energy of the crowd and the



fans. Being at the tournament, which they treated me so well, that gives you extra motivation, I think, to be positive and to, I don't know, have a little extra umph to power through and win the tournament.

Q. There's a lot of injuries going around. People are talking about many things, tennis balls. You've proven to be extraordinarily durable the last couple of years. You don't travel with a full-time physio.

JESSICA PEGULA: No.

Q. Do you have a secret sauce you can spread to everybody?

JESSICA PEGULA: If it's working so well for me, I don't want to share it (smiling).

No, I don't know. It'll so funny because early in my career, I've said this before, I was the exact opposite. I was not durable. I was not stable. I was not consistent. Those were nothing... If you looked up me in the dictionary, none of those words would have been used to describe me at all.

It's amazing how I've been able to overcome that, I guess figure things out. Of course, I always wanted to be, but I think I'm just a lot smarter in my approach to my preparation and my recovery.

I know there's a lot of injuries now. I did deal with a lot of injuries in my early 20s. At the same time I feel like it balances itself out. There were a lot of years where I felt like I didn't really ever play a full season. I know some girls experience that now. I think all of us at some point usually go through a really tough injury or a tough couple injuries, tough years.

I don't know. I mean, I know everyone thinks I'm durable now. It's only been a couple years. There's very many years early on in my career where I was not injury-free. Maybe it's kind of balancing itself out, which is, I don't know, good I guess. I'm glad I figured it out before it was too late (laughter).

Q. Today you're finally practice in stadium. How you feel?

JESSICA PEGULA: Good, yeah. It's always nice to hit on the stadium court. I feel like it's maybe playing a little bit faster. Obviously the conditions are still very windy, so sometimes it's tough to really grasp how the court or the balls or anything feels when the wind's constantly kind of swirling, making it difficult.

We play in a lot of places that have a lot of windy conditions, very similar. So I feel good, yeah. I'm happy to get going tomorrow. I'm going to practice again later tonight to see what it feels like at night. Hopefully, yeah, it feels good.

There's not really much choice right now. I have to play tomorrow regardless, so it doesn't really matter. But I'll be ready to go.

Q. What do you think about this competition system that is similar for the football?

JESSICA PEGULA: I'm sorry, can you repeat?

Q. What do you think about the competition system in the tournament?

JESSICA PEGULA: Like the format?

Q. Yes. Very similar for the football.

JESSICA PEGULA: Where if you don't lose, you're not out, right? Is that what you mean?

Q. Yes.

JESSICA PEGULA: It's definitely a lot different. I talked about it before, like last year kind of messed me up. Usually when you lose, you want to get out of there, fly to the next week, get away from the site and the courts because you're, like, upset that you lost, right? You're like, I just want to get out of here.

Last year was weird. You lose, you're still at the same place and you have to play again. Even though you have another chance, it's hard to brush away, like, a loss because every year the format we play is you lose and you go to the next city or you go home.

I think mentally it was a lot different. I didn't expect to not struggle with it, but I didn't expect to think it would be difficult. Last year I felt like it was actually very difficult to have to lose a match and then come back and play the next day or two days later.

Hopefully I can mentally prepare better this time. It's great that you still have a chance, especially with the tough competition we have here. All of us are the girls that have been playing the best all year, so it makes it really hard. Some days just go better than others.

Yeah, it's just a different format, but I think it makes it exciting to see the different matchups. I think girls playing differently against different players, some play better, some

player worse. It will be nice to see that you can see those matchups more often before someone being eliminated.

Q. For tomorrow you have a positive record against Rybakina. That is important for you or what is your opinion about?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I think matchups are important. Obviously sometimes girls, for whatever reason, are more comfortable playing certain players. Some aren't. I have losing records against girls and winning records against others.

Yeah, I mean, we had a really tough match last time we played in Miami. I felt like I had a lot of chances. Then I played her I think actually in Miami again, previously, before she was kind of ranked higher, so I feel pretty comfortable playing against her.

It's always tough playing someone who is such a big server, such a powerful player, because sometimes there's not much you can do if they're feeling their game and they're really on.

I think I play well against those types of players, so I'm just going to have to buckle down tomorrow and not get frustrated if her level is really high, do the best I can.

But more or less, yeah, I think I'm excited about the matchup and to test myself against someone that's been having an amazing couple years.

Q. With you and Coco both in the singles and doubles, how much time do you dedicate outside of the actual matches to the doubles? Do you all meet for 30 minutes before to game plan?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, we probably should practice doubles more (smiling). When we played in Beijing, we were laughing. We definitely felt like we haven't played in a while. We felt kind of off.

But it was funny, yeah, the other day we practiced, we saved the last 20 minutes just to do some doubles points, kind of get back into the rhythm.

Yeah, I mean, we don't spend a ton of time. Here it may be different. Throughout the year it depends on how we're doing in singles. If we are out early in singles, like we were a few times this year, I think in Madrid and Rome, we practiced doubles quite a bit just because we had a lot of free time. It's something different and fun that we don't get to practice a lot, so that's always fun. It kind of mixes things up. We did that yesterday or the other day.

But to be honest, it's not a ton. We probably should more. We're busy, so... We try. But, yeah, we definitely go over game plans. All of us know each other, know how we play. The singles and doubles players, we know how the teams play, we've played everyone really. Nothing comes as a surprise. Doubles strategy is really important because it can be the first couple balls, maybe a few formations that are working. We definitely go over that. It's nothing elaborate. Before we walk out on the court, we go over a game plan of what we should do.

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