

# Billie Jean King Cup

Sunday, 17 April 2022

Team USA

Captain Kathy Rinaldi

Asia Muhammad

Alison Riske

Jessica Pegula

Shelby Rogers

Desirae Krawczyk

Press Conference

PEGULA-MUHAMMAD/Kichenok-Yastremska

7-6, 6-3

USA - 3

Ukraine - 2

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Asia, a week ago obviously not on the roster. Six days later here you are playing the leading role. What were your thoughts from the start when you knew you were going to play, through the match, to now?**

ASIA MUHAMMAD: Yeah, I was pretty nervous in the first set. It's really different playing for your country rather than just kind of playing another tournament. Especially I just really didn't want to let my teammates down at that certain point of the day. I just wanted to really do my best.

But it was nice playing with Jessie. We've played before, so I felt super comfortable. That helped me relax a bit. Having Kathy on the sidelines, too, when we got to take breaks, just talk to her.

So, yeah, I mean, after the first set I loosened up a bit and got to enjoy it a bit more. But, yeah, leading up to the match and in the first set I was pretty nervous.

**Q. Jess, you came in here after your singles, spoke about what you weren't happy with. What did you feel like you were happy with in the doubles?**

# BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

BY  BNP PARIBAS

JESSICA PEGULA: Well, I thought we just fought really well for every single point. I thought I came out playing really well. Then I thought Asia was kind of playing better at the end there. That's how doubles work.

Like she said, we played before. It was really fun just to go out there and, yeah, I don't know, be in that situation. Like Billie Jean says: Pressure is a privilege.

I had to forget about the first match, yeah, move on and try to clinch for the team. Just happy we were able to go out there and do that. I just thought we fought for every point.

**Q. Asia, you're the only player who actually has played on the junior Billie Jean King Cup team years ago.**

ASIA MUHAMMAD: Yes.

**Q. What have been the biggest similarities and differences representing your country then versus now?**

ASIA MUHAMMAD: Yeah, I mean, for juniors it's fine. You are kind of in one place, seeing a lot of the other countries there. You're excited.

I don't know, now I think I appreciate it a lot more than when I was younger. Yeah, I would say that's the biggest. I really appreciate it now. I know how special it is.

Especially this team that I've had this week, it's been the most fun. When I tell you guys I've not had this much fun, ever. It's been the greatest week (laughter). It's been the greatest week with all of these girls, on court, off court. Today, just having the girls on the sideline, it's been so much fun. I'm really grateful to be able to be here.

**Q. Kathy, lineup change for doubles. Obviously Asia and Jessie have played well in the past. Was that the tipping point?**

CAPTAIN RINALDI: Yeah, I mean, it's been a long day and a tough day. When you look at this team, everybody plays doubles and everybody plays it well. You just try to put together the best team that you possibly can with the

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

best chemistry.

Obviously we've been practicing, so again that's very difficult because you can see they all get along and they're all super close and having a great week.

I was really gutted. It really did come down to the wire. I did, I went with Jess. My gut told me to go with Jess and Asia. They've played together. They know each other's games. They've had some great results together this year. Asia has had a tremendous year this year. I thought, you know what, that's our team. I'm glad I did. They did great.

You know what? We're only as good as our team chemistry. The girls really came out and supported them after a long, tough day. That's what great teams do. Really proud of this team. Really proud how they supported each other (tearing up). When I say we had each other's backs, they really did have each other's backs. The fun is just starting (laughter).

**Q. Des, even though you are a rookie, when it comes to team sports, you probably have the most experience coming from a college background. What were you able to bring from your collegiate past to the team? How is it similar and different?**

DESIRAE KRAWCZYK: I mean, I'm just so happy to be here and just support these girls. I mean, it was just so much fun cheering them on every single point. Maybe too much.

SHELBY ROGERS: She literally has bruises on her fingers, guys.

DESIRAE KRAWCZYK: So much fun. I'm so proud of them. So happy to be part of this team.

**Q. Shelby, take us through your match. What was it like watching your teammates picking up there in the end?**

SHELBY ROGERS: I think all day we just really felt that fighting spirit of Ukraine. It was really special to see, but really tough to go against. I'm just so proud of my team for stepping up to that, having nerves of steel, really playing unbelievable.

I mean, I know every time we step on the court, we leave it all out there no matter what. They didn't want to go down without a fight, and that was very evident.

We did the best we can every time we step on the court. I think we all came together today and fought together and worked through till the very last point. It's not over till that

very last point is played. We did a really great job of that today.

**Q. Kathy, what will you take away and what will you remember from this week?**

CAPTAIN RINALDI: Oh, wow, that's a loaded question. The escape room (laughter).

So many things. These ties are just extremely special in so many ways. Really getting to know these players even more. I've known them for so long. Working with the USTA for, gosh, I think going on 15 years. I've known them for quite a long time.

Just the competitive spirit, but the camaraderie off the court, just all the fun times. I think we'll remember the matches, but it's really about the experience off the court that really makes it extra special. That's always my goal as captain, is to have a week where they're going to remember for the rest of their lives.

Obviously winning is always a lot more fun, but just to walk away and think, Wow, I want to do that again. That was one of the best experiences of my career.

I hope that when they're said and done under my captaincy, that's what they'll say. I know I'll never forget one of these. I treasure these weeks so much (tearing up).

**Q. Kathy, speaking to the fundraising initiative this week, obviously the contributions will likely put tennis over its goal of \$1 million in support of Ukraine. What are your thoughts on how the tennis community came out this whole week?**

CAPTAIN RINALDI: The tennis community, it's just incredible. As I've always said, we're a family. We really are one big family, a close-knit family. When things get tough, and we know the last few years have been really tough with the pandemic and now with Ukraine, we really unite, we come together, do what's right, do what's best. We really look after each other.

As I told the Ukrainian players when they arrived at our dinner, these players, whenever I reached out to them, it's the first thing they asked: What can we do? It was first and foremost on our minds to make them feel supported.

The money that they've raised has been incredible. As I told the Ukrainian players, No one should have to worry alone. That was our motto when we were going through the pandemic with our players: Nobody should have to worry alone, we're in this together.

It's been an incredibly special week on and off the court. It was incredible tennis. Ukraine should be so incredibly proud of their players. They came out today and they came out swinging, they played some incredible tennis. We were fortunate to get that doubles. These girls really stepped up.

Yeah, I couldn't be more proud of the tennis community to come together, like I said. I think relationships are so important. Turned pro when I was 14, so I know so many people. Tennis has given me so much that I'm so thankful for. That's what tennis does. It's the greatest sport.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports