

# Adelaide International

Saturday, 6 January 2024

Adelaide, South Australia, Australia

## Jessica Pegula

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Jess, welcome back to Adelaide. Can you give us your thoughts on playing here and preparation for the Australian Open.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, actually it's my first time here, so excited to be coming from Perth and being in Adelaide, two cities that I haven't been before, so that's kind of fun.

Obviously the setup here is really nice with the hotel and walking to the courts and stuff like that. It's been a nice experience so far, and hopefully I can have some good prep before I go to Melbourne.

**Q. You're No. 3 in the world, had that great run to the finals in Mexico with four very good results, straight-set wins, but still to get past a quarterfinal at a Grand Slam. What's it going to take for you to get to that semifinal, that final stage, which surely you must be due, I guess?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Well, I think I've said this before, but I just need to win my quarterfinal match and I'll be past.

But no, seriously, that's kind of all I need to do. I feel like I've put up obviously great stats over the last couple years, super consistent, had a great run at the finals, so hopefully maybe beating that many high-caliber players back-to-back will give me some confidence maybe later in a Slam.

But again, I don't want to think ahead to quarterfinals, to semis. I still have to win my first round, second, third, fourth, and that's still really tough just to make second week, and then I'll have to focus on that first before I get ahead of myself because that's still obviously very hard to do.

**Q. What about playing doubles? You're ranked 5 in doubles. There's not many top players who play both to a high level. What does that give you? How does that benefit your game?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I love playing doubles. I think it's helped me a lot in my game, work on a lot of intangibles, playing pressure points, a lot of serve return practice, working on your feel around the court, your lobs, strategizing, reading what the opponents are doing or the

other team is doing. I really enjoy playing.

I'd much kind of rather do that than sit and think about my next singles match where I tend to overthink or players tend to overthink. So that can be kind of tough sometimes.

I like to break it up with playing doubles. That's just, I guess, enjoyable for me.

**Q. You've also got a charity, you've got a business, got a successful family background. What sort of perspective does that give you as a professional sports person? Is tennis everything, or can you step back and say, hey, it's important but it doesn't always matter that much?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I think you go back and forth dealing with those questions throughout your career. Yeah, I started focusing on other things and I was hurt a lot because that's the reality that you have to face, and I thought it would be a healthy thing for me to do, and I still think it's healthy to have other things off the court that you're interested in.

They say the greatest thing you can do to get out of your own head is to help other people or something like that, and I think that's kind of the perspective that I see.

But at the same time, tennis has been my whole life. It's been ever since I was six, seven years old, it's been my goal to be professional, to be No. 1, to win Grand Slams, and that never really went away. So I would say it's a back and forth; yes, it's everything, but at the same time, you kind of have to have that right healthy perspective, I think, in order to keep improving and keep playing.

The year is really tough and it's long, and I think in those tough moments, that perspective can also be really beneficial.

**Q. You've got the charity A Lending Paw, as well. Why did you set that up? What was the thinking there?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I love dogs and I love animals. I just wanted something where it was dogs helping people, people helping dogs or other service animals really, and I just enjoy it, and I think it makes everyone happy. It's cool; training service dogs is really expensive, so people



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with disabilities can't really afford or they're trying to raise money to buy one, and I just thought it would be a cool way to help someone that needs a service dog and help pay for their training, so that was something I got to do at the US Open, which was really cool.

**Q. I wonder if you might give us a little insight into your off-season, how you've prepared for this summer coming to Australia.**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, off-season this year felt super short. It's always not long, but it felt even shorter this year. I think every girl I've talked to this week has said that, Oh, I blinked and it was over.

But I took some time after the finals. I went on vacation, went to the U.S. Virgin Islands, and that was really fun. I went with a group of friends, and came back and really just spent time at home. I think that's one thing is you want to go on a trip, but at the same time I also don't want to travel anywhere, so it was really nice being home for the holiday. Especially for us in America, celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas has always been really special, at least for my family. We're usually always together.

I spent a lot of time at home in Florida and then up in Buffalo, New York, as well, with my family between football and hockey games and stuff like that.

That was really nice. It was nice to be able to see everyone unwind a bit and kind of relax, but I didn't really do that much. I was in between that and then you start training again, and it kind of takes up a lot of your time.

**Q. Last season it seemed like there was your success, Coco Gauff, Madison Keys, felt like women's tennis kind of got its mojo back a little bit. Do you have a collective sense of where you're going? Do you feed off each other's success?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Definitely. Maddie and I played United Cup last year, and she didn't lose a match. I had a great one against Iga. We ended up winning it. I think that gave us all, including the men, a lot of momentum going into the year. We played great in Australia.

We tried to carry it throughout the year as much as we could, and then obviously we love playing in the States in the summer and that whole thing.

I definitely think we motivate each other a lot, whether it's actually saying stuff to each other or also just motivating each other with our results and seeing us do well and kind of hyping each other up. I think that's really important.

It's tough when it's a long year, it's a hard year, and to see your other peers and compatriots do well is always

motivating. It makes you think that you can do it, too. You practice together or maybe you beat them recently and maybe they have a bigger result, and you're like, oh, my gosh. You're fired up to try and do better than them.

I think it's all like a healthy competition, and I think that's really nice, and we're also all friends and support each other, as well. I think it's nice not feeling like the pressure is just on one of us. I think it's nice when it's spread out a bit, and I think it tends to help us do better.

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