

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Jessica Pegula

Press Conference

J. PEGULA/T. Zidasek

6-1, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Congrats on the win. Can you talk about the match?

JESSICA PEGULA: I feel good. Yeah, glad I didn't make it any more difficult than it needed to be. I was playing really well there for first like 30, 45 minutes. Then she started playing much better and I thought I was just did a good job to not lose focus and just hold serve and get to that tiebreak and then finish it out. So it was good.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Into the second week, just in terms of managing this first week, which has been a bit of a roller coaster at times. What are you most proud about in terms of being able to get through these matches the way that you did?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it's been really tough week since I started, I don't think I had a day off, I waited to play until the last day and then had some tough matches.

Played mixed, played doubles, got to win with Coco yesterday, so I think I'm just happy, yeah, that I've been able to manage my emotions and physically as well be able to be okay going into the second week. It's always a good thing there.

Yeah, just get through tough matches. I've had some roller coasters and I think that's really important getting into the second week.

Q. Is it too sort of boring maybe now to just win on one match point?

JESSICA PEGULA: No, it's not. I don't take that for granted at all any more. Yeah, I was happy. I know I was up a set and 3-0 again and I was kind of like, okay.

But I didn't think I played bad, I thought she played well, it was just one break, really, and she started playing serving better, going for her shots more.

So I'm glad I was just able to kind of manage that second



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set the way she was playing and I ended up playing a really good tiebreaker, so, no, definitely not getting bored with one match point at all.

Q. Are you someone who, you did, of course, have those two adventurous finishes in the first two rounds, are those completely vanished from your head, do you on court today as you get to match point think, okay, let's shut the door this time?

JESSICA PEGULA: I mean, I think I was thinking that every time I got a match point, it just wasn't happening the first 18 times or whatever it was.

But, no, I think more, I mean, I'm happy to get through those because I think at the same time for me to be able to have all those match points and bounce back is just as hard as the latter.

So I was more proud of myself and also I was playing really, really well to be up 6-1, 5-2, 6-1, 5-1 or whatever it was and then 6-1, 3-0, I'm playing like really, really good tennis and I think that's kind of more where I'm focusing on. And not that I expect to play lights out the entire time, I think that's unrealistic and if that happens it's rare and you just take it, but through the two-week slam it's definitely not going to happen. So I think I've experienced both sides of that the first week.

Q. A bit of a non-tennis question. This has been an actually awful few weeks for the U.S. and I'm sure it's affected you quite personally. Curious, as someone who spends so much time on the road, especially in Europe, you've been here for about seven weeks now, do you get asked to explain America to people? It's something that we experience, that American journalists experience.

JESSICA PEGULA: That's a tough question. No, I don't think I've ever really had anyone ask me what's going on in America. I think more initially it's just more like the shock of, yeah, just what has happened recently and just feeling sorry and feeling upset and just feeling kind of devastated emotionally as to like mourning the kids and the people that have died.

And especially we just had a shooting as well in Buffalo, which we're pretty close. So, yeah, I haven't, my parents went and did some stuff for the community in Buffalo and I didn't really get a chance to talk to them much just because I've been over here.



But, yeah, it's just sad. I think that's more what we're all feeling, I don't know, no one's really asked me anything, but it's kind of just a, I don't know, the topic where you touch on it and you're just kind of sad to really talk about it, I think.

Q. In a similar vein as you were just talking about, Coco has spoken out about issues and Amanda actually spoke out when there was a mass shooting years ago in Florida. Have you spoken to any of them about, is this something you share with some of the other players?

JESSICA PEGULA: To be honest, I have not talked to either of them about it at all. I haven't talked to any player about it. I don't know, maybe one time, but usually when we are here we're just thinking about the next match and tennis. And not that that's more important than what's going on, but I think here maybe we just try not to think about it. And then usually if you go back to your hotel and you're on your phone and reading the news and all this stuff is where you kind of come across it more.

But as far as being on site when we're getting ready to play doubles or we're practicing together I haven't really said anything to them or vice versa.

Q. Speaking about Coco, how did that pairing come along, do you have a specific goal like the year end finals because Caty McNally is here and usually she's her partner, but you play together quite a bit, so do you think the year-end finals might be a goal?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, of course. I mean, I think we really weren't supposed to play together in the Middle East and then we won Doha, which was a pretty big tournament and were kind of like, okay, well now we have a good shot to make year end if we play a couple big tournaments together and do well.

So, yeah, that was our goal. I know she played with Caty a lot, I played with Caty awhile ago before she played with Coco, so I played with both of them. And I think they're both great girls and I think more too I think Caty's single ranking wasn't as high, so some of the big tournaments she just wasn't there playing she was playing other events. And that kind of led to just Coco and I playing the same events, playing doubles together.

And I think we get along really well, both of our teams get along really well, so it's just fun. And we got kind of lucky that it was last minute to do well there in Doha. But, yeah, we definitely, going into these tournaments, I think she really likes playing doubles and she wants to win, so of course if we do well year end would definitely be a great goal to reach.

Q. I was wondering if you could just tell me what you felt about Tamara's game today. She had a wonderful Roland Garros last year, she had COVID at the beginning of the year and she's kind of like looking for her consistency, but, yeah, how you saw her game today.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I knew she was going to be a very tough player. She obviously likes playing here, she had a big breakthrough here last year and I definitely didn't take that lightly.

I played her once awhile ago, but on hard court, and I think she likes the clay better, at least from what I think.

So I knew it was going to be tough and I was going to have to be very strict and stick to my game plan. She competes very, very well and even I was up a set and 3-0 and she was still right there fighting for every single point trying to get back in the match, which she did.

So I was definitely prepared for that, but, yeah, she has a great forehand, she hits it really heavy for how little she is, she can really rip it really heavy, especially on the clay.

So I was trying to avoid her forehand as much as possible, but yeah, I know it's been a tough year for her as far as getting COVID and how that affected her and then trying to get your momentum and confidence back, I know it's not easy.

But no, she's a really good player, I think she will be well off and, yeah, she's been playing some good tennis.

Q. It seems like Iga Swiatek is unbeatable. From your view what is she doing so differently just to be always the winner?

JESSICA PEGULA: I don't know. If I knew the answer I would start doing it.

No, I think, I don't know, she just seems so, yeah, like she's kind of hit another level than all of us right now. Yeah, it's a little scary.

I think her athleticism is very off the charts. I think her defense is really, really, really good, kind of similar to like an Ash Barty where they have offense and defense, they can get in the corners, dig out the points, play really good defense and then also take the racquet out of your hands sometimes.

So, yeah, I think that's just something that I think her athleticism and defensive skills are really, really good. And then I think she's gotten much more offensive this year, been more aggressive when she's needed to be.

And I think she's winning matches maybe much quicker,

whereas maybe the other years, besides obviously when she won the French Open, no big deal, but (laughing) on the hard courts, you know, she's playing shorter points and I think that's helped her a lot. And clay, she's been comfortable on clay for awhile, so not too much of a surprise.

But I think just her athleticism and obviously now her focus. I don't know how she does it, but the way she stays focused throughout these matches is pretty incredible. I'm not sure what she's doing, but yeah, she's definitely a step above us all right now.

Q. Two years ago making round of 16 in Paris probably would have been like ticker tape parade in your mind in terms of a result like this. But how are you feeling I guess as you get this result? Is this a big deal to you or is this now what you expect of yourself? I know you wanted to make the results at the slams because you were doing it at the 1000s, now it's two slams second week.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, no, I'm really, yeah, happy, really happy to be here, especially at the French Open where maybe a lot of people didn't think I would play as well. But I think Madrid gave me a lot of confidence and just finding my game on clay and just being so much smarter out there.

I don't know why it feels so much different than last year, not that I was, obviously I was playing well last year, but I think I maybe last year was just more frustrated on the clay, whereas this year I'm definitely a lot more patient and thinking out there.

So I definitely thought I had a good chance to go deep in this tournament. Again, taking it one match at a time. I had a couple really tough matches, so I'm just glad to be through and I'm glad I had to beat a couple good clay courters as well, I think that gives me a lot of confidence. And next match definitely it's going to be the same thing, won't be easy, but it never is, especially these days, every match is really tough.

But, yeah, definitely very happy to say that I've made second week at French Open. That's something I don't think a lot of people thought I could do.

Q. Kind of a random question, but aside from sports, what's the most special thing about Buffalo?

JESSICA PEGULA: About Buffalo? I would say the sense of community. It's a pretty small town. Everybody knows everybody. It's pretty crazy. It's, I guess like where there's a city of good neighbors kind of feel, where everyone kind of knows everybody.

My husband 's from there and I just, I remember the first time we were out somewhere and people kind of knew

me, obviously because of my parents or they maybe recognize me. No one said anything to me and they're all said everything to him, Hey, Taylor. Oh, my God, that's my goalie coach, that was my baseball coach, that was this kid I went to high school with.

And it's just like that feel, like you go out and you kind of have a connection with everybody. And I think that's what makes it so special is it's such a small-town feel and everyone really gets behind each other and roots for each other, whatever's going on. And obviously to have two big sports teams there, so they're very, very crazy about their sports teams, but I would say the sense of community is probably the best part.

Q. I'll ask you to put your pundit hat on, but you and Iga are the two top seeds left going into the second week.

JESSICA PEGULA: That's so funny. I wish we were on opposite sides of the draw.

Q. Opposite quarters even maybe would be nice.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah.

Q. But just, I was wondering if you could kind of give us a sense of how you see the draw right now for both top half and bottom half.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, honestly, the top, the bottom half seems kind of open, I don't know, yeah.

Q. Leylah.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, not open, but like there's good players, but it seems like it's maybe fallen apart certain sections a little bit.

I don't know, I haven't really, I feel bad, I should have known this, gosh, I usually look. I haven't seen the bottom because I don't have a stupid, and I can't ever find the frickin' PDF, like the sheet, where you just look at the sheet. It drives me nuts. I have the app and I can't see who is going to play who.

But as far as my top half, obviously I have a tough match against Begu, I lost to her twice now, I think, I don't know, something like that.

So, yeah, it will be tough. She can be really, really tricky and she has some really good wins and I think she's a very underrated player as far as, even experience-wise. She's been around and she's had consistent good results and she's always tough to play against. So that's going to be really tough.

And as far as Iga, I mean obviously I have to see her as the favorite going through. Hopefully we play each other

in the quarters, that would be great.

And as far as the others, I mean the bottom seems pretty open. I think Amanda's playing really well. I don't know who she plays next.

Q. Leylah.

JESSICA PEGULA: Leylah maybe. Who does Coco play?

Q. Mertens.

JESSICA PEGULA: Okay. So, yeah, so I think at least in my opinion I think it's a great chance for Coco again to make, I think she made quarters here last year, yeah, make quarters again. And she even said something to me, like she thought her draw kind of fell apart a little bit and she's like, Yeah, you know, you get nervous because you're supposed to be through, but then you're also happy at the same time.

And I think Amanda has been playing really well. I think she is someone that can take the racquet out of your hand at any time and maybe a little bit lucky to get through her last match, but sometimes that's what you need, so I think she's going to be very dangerous.

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