

# National Bank Open

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## Jessica Pegula

Press Conference



J. PEGULA/A. Krueger

6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Jess, if you can think back to your singles match, can you talk us through your performance there.

JESSICA PEGULA: Seems so long ago. Yeah, it was an interesting match. Not really the cleanest from either of us. The conditions were really crazy with the wind, and it just felt like we couldn't really get ahold of any good tennis, to be honest. Played the best I could, knew it was going to be a little ugly, and happy that eventually I got through that.

THE MODERATOR: All right, questions?

**Q. My question is on doubles, curious how you and Giu-Giu Olmos paired up this week, and what can we expect from you on the doubles court the rest of the summer?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it was fun. Actually, I think the girl we played today, Desirae Krawczyk, actually set us up. She wasn't sure if she was going to play with Caroline here, and so she asked me if I wanted to play, and then she ended up playing with Caroline. Then she was like, Oh, Giu-Giu is looking, and then Giu-Giu texted me. So it's pretty, it's pretty casual, to be honest. She just shot me a text and I was like, Sure, let's play.

But, yeah, I thought we actually played really well, and we were talking about how sometimes it takes some time to get used to a partner, but I felt like that we clicked pretty fast. We beat some really good teams, and obviously lost a tough one today to another very good team, but definitely could have gone our way with a few points here and there. She has a partner that she usually plays with who just couldn't come this week, so she will be back with her.

Then, for me, I'm not sure. I know Coco doesn't really, isn't interested in playing, or at least I'm not, we're not thinking of playing, so I probably will take it easy on the doubles the rest of the year, so, yeah, we'll see.

I think I'll just play maybe whenever I kind of want to (laughing), and maybe just focus on singles the rest of the year.

**Q. Five Americans into the quarterfinals here in Toronto. It's like the most at any 1000 like since there were 1000s. There's a slight irony, just kind of coming off the Olympics, I know you guys were probably wanting a little bit more in terms of Team USA, but what do you make of that stat, just being able to kind of flood the zone up here?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it's nice to hear at the start of the summer hard court swing. I feel like a lot of us, it's our favorite time of year, it's our favorite time to play tennis, it's usually when I feel like we do really well. It's always nice to see, I mean, American tennis right now we have so much depth. I saw there was like a stat there's like five of us in the top 15 or something. It's like me, Coco, Emma, Danielle and Madison, so there's five in the top 15, which is insane.

Like you said, obviously we wanted to do better at the Olympics and having a lot of top players, but obviously didn't go our way. So it's kind of nice to come back here and kind of get back into the same mindset of being able to be in North America, play on the hard courts where I think we feel really comfortable, so it's a pretty cool stat.

**Q. Going over from the Olympics, obviously the surface change, can you talk about the challenge of that, and also how were you kind of able to maximize your limited prep time?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, I knew it was going to be a tough turnaround. Unfortunately, didn't do as well in Paris, so I had at least a few extra days before I got here, so maybe two or three where I practiced. It wasn't the easiest, but I think at the end of the day I play really good hard court tennis, so I knew that if I could just get in the right frame of mind that I would feel more comfortable once I got back out there.

That's definitely what happened, I think especially the first round, having to play Pliskova as my second round but my first match, was really, you know, I think getting through



that gave me a lot of confidence. Obviously she's a really good hard-court player and played some really good tennis.

Then today was just more of a competitive-not-getting-frustrated battle.

It's good to have both those types of matches, I think, coming into week 1, and hopefully I can just keep building off that into Cincy. Again, I love this kind of swing of the summer, it's definitely my favorite part of the year, so I try to use that as confidence, even though I haven't gotten the most prep time.

**Q. You had some great results here in Canada. What is it about playing in Toronto that brings out your best tennis?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I know, everyone keeps asking me that, because they're like, You win so many matches here. And I'm like, All right, yeah.

I don't know what it is. I just like coming here. I feel like it feels, I don't know, feels like home, kind of. I like the atmosphere, I like the courts, I like the cities that we go to, everything seems kind of easy. I have a base in Buffalo, which is not that far from here, it's not super far from Montreal either. I think it's just I'm comfortable up in the northeast kind of area. I just enjoy playing here, and I think the conditions kind of suit my game maybe with a little bit of a faster hard court, which I think benefits me as well.

**Q. You played a lot of doubles before, how did that build up your singles game?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Definitely. I mean, I learned a lot from playing doubles. I think my singles game helped my doubles and my doubles game helped my singles. I think my intangibles as far as strategy, serve return, taking pressure points as well being a returner, extra serve-return practice. Also a lot of just small intangibles, lobs, positioning, seeing where other people are, just kind of being smarter. There's just a lot of awkward shots in doubles that you don't always get to practice in singles because they don't happen as much, but when they do happen you want to be ready for them, and I think doubles really helps with that.

**Q. Can you talk about, I know the Olympics wasn't exactly what you hoped for on the court, but off the court it looked like Team USA had a lot of camaraderie and a fun time. Can you talk about the dynamics of Team USA and some of your favorite memories from the Olympics.**

JESSICA PEGULA: Oh, gosh, it was so much fun. We had such a great group of guys and girls, and I think we really embraced that and embraced the team atmosphere. We went out to try and find a Chipotle, it took us like an hour and a half to get there. The Ubers around the village were not, like they couldn't really get close, so we kept having to walk, and then it was kind of like five minutes away, and then it would be like 10 minutes away, and then 20 minutes away. Then everyone was trying to all get Ubers to see which one would come. Then, unfortunately, the car I was in took a very long time.

Yeah, that was kind of fun, and then Fritz paid for that, since he's got the Chipotle deal, he hooked us up with the Chipotle. He's like, Guys, we got to go. So that was pretty funny.

There was a lot of really good memories. I think it was so much fun being in the village with everybody, at least for me, for two to three days before I left, but it was really cool to gain that experience, and just rooting everyone on. I mean, we were trying to be supportive, knowing we had to play, but also trying to get out there and watch a few matches while we could.

I don't know, I feel like it's more fun when you get to play like that as a team, even though it's still individual. It's always nice to have that camaraderie and kind of take advantage of it, since it's very rare in tennis. It was really cool and, yeah, it was so much fun. I had a blast.

**Q. Looking ahead to playing Peyton, a curveball of having so many Americans in the quarters, quite a few all-American matchups, but what do you make of kind of her game and how unique it is in terms of that forehand of trying to battle it back on these courts?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, Peyton's super talented, really good athlete, very flashy. Like, I feel like her highs are really high, where she's ripping forehands and moving well and playing aggressive.

I think I played her last year, or a year ago in DC, but obviously she's had a year under her belt on tour, played some really big matches, had some good wins, good experiences, so I'm sure it will be a completely different match. Seems like she's been battling hard out there and staying in these matches, giving herself chances to win, and, yeah, I feel like she's playing pretty confident, it seems like.

It's always tricky playing someone that has big weapons, so I'll kind of just do my best to kind of limit those as much as I can, but still also play my game and, yeah, hopefully we'll have a great match out there. I think she's definitely

someone that, for U.S. tennis, we'll definitely see at the top. I think, yeah, I think she's extremely talented and she's got a good career ahead of her.

**Q. In recent years you've spoken about how you and your mom have been reconnecting with your Korean heritage, and even going to the orphanage where your mom was, I guess, taken in, in Seoul. Curious, as you have, I guess, your profile has risen, and as you are seeing more and more young fans, for example, who are coming up to you, who really love you, just because they see themselves in your success, how aware are you of the representational aspect of what you do, and how has your own relationship with your cultural identity changed in the last few years once you've done all that work?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I've spoken on that. It's definitely changed a lot. Not that I ever neglected it, but, you know, I live in the U.S., I live in Florida, like there's not, it's not a big Korean community or let alone Asian community at all. So, I mean, as I've definitely gotten ranked higher and I played actually in Korea several times now, it's been like a drastic change into how much I've been, I guess, welcomed and rooted for and cheered for, not just because of myself, but also because my mom also, you know, having a higher status in sports and being a female and being Asian and in sports, that there's no really representative of that at all.

I think the kind of both happening at the same time really definitely increased that and it was really cool to just see, and I think we've definitely been a lot more open and kind of like, Oh, wow, like they're super supportive and they think it's real cool. I just think it's amazing when I see the really young girls that are also maybe half Korean, and they're like, Oh, my God, I'm half Korean just like you, and I'm just like, Oh, my God, this is the cutest thing ever, that they make that kind of connection I think is super sweet.

Obviously winning Seoul last year was really, really cool. I mean, I'm so glad that I can, yeah, say that I won that tournament. Then again being, yeah, how they have kind of like lifted me up and taken me in as a half Korean I think is really, really cool, and it's cool to have that kind of connection with a different culture, especially one that is so different from how I grew up, but at the same time learning and kind of engaging with it more and more has been really fun.

**Q. When you talk about engaging with the culture, have you tried learning the language, have you just gotten more into it a little bit more?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I'm not good at languages. I'm just

not. But it's been really cool, like I have a lot of people that I've met that are Korean, that lived there, a lot of them live in like New York City or LA, and they have kind of connected with me, and they have been wanting to get me more involved with, when I go to Korea, like people to meet, places to do, things to see, and kind of like teaching me a little bit more. They keep telling me I need to like at least learn to speak a little bit. They're like, If you just learn to speak a little bit, like, Oh, my God, like, it will be amazing, like it won't take much. And I'm like, Oh, I don't know if my Korean is very good, but yeah, maybe that's the next step is learning some more of the language.

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