

# US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

## Jessica Pegula

### Press Conference

J. PEGULA/C. Giorgi

6-2, 6-2

**THE MODERATOR:** Straight sets. A crisp hour and 22 minutes. Can you assess your performance?

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yes. I thought it was a good match. You know, Camila is always very tough. You never know what you're going to get. She's a great ball striker, good athlete, goes for her shots.

I knew what I had to do. I've played her several times this year already, a lot of times throughout my career. I knew what I needed to do but sometimes it depends as well on how you're playing and how she's playing.

I think I was able to kind of execute what I wanted to do today.

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions.

**Q. I just talked to Camila and she thought she didn't even play badly, just that you played so well. For how you played in the summer and played at such a high level, where would you assess that performance from the matches that you played in Montreal, winning, and just in general how dangerous she is?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah, I think it was one of my better matches. Maybe more how I was playing kind of in Montreal than, let's say, Cincinnati. At least conditions-wise and how I was striking the ball.

Yeah, I mean, I just played really solid. I had a lot of depth on my shots, which is important against her, because she's someone that plays very aggressive and can attack.

Yeah, I think I just did everything really solid. I don't think I did anything spectacular, but everything was pretty even.

Only thing, first set my serve was a little off, but I was able to get it back and actually serve okay in the second.



**Q. It was a long summer for you and yet you were able to get that rest from Cincinnati. Do you feel fully all good now and just ready to rock 'n roll here like that?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah, I feel good. It's nice obviously to have some time in between Cincinnati and the Open.

You know, here it's always very busy. There is a lot to do, a lot going on, it's New York. It's nice to come in here feeling refreshed. I think you have to be in order to want to, you know, take on hopefully the next couple weeks here in the city.

**Q. I'm doing a piece on late bloomers. I think you're the last piece of the puzzle. Probably seems like a lifetime ago where there were five years where you were struggling with injuries, not breaking into the top 100, not winning much at slams, and then things clicked in 2020 and now you're here. What kind of fortitude, what kind of perseverance, what kind of things did you need to do to keep believing in that period that you'd have a career like you do now?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah. It's crazy. I mean, looking back, I think I have said this before, sometimes I'm like, what was I doing? I really don't know what was going through my head at certain points of my career when I was younger (smiling).

Yeah, you know, I don't think, if I didn't get injured I don't think I'd be where I am today. That sounds corny and cliché, but it's really true. I mean, I learned so much from those injuries and when I was hurt that I became, like, I don't know why, but I became obsessed with getting better. I was so much more anal and detail-oriented on everything I did; my warmups, my practices, my cooldowns, my rehab. Like everything.

I think it's because all I could do is really rehab for those few years in and out of injuries. That forced me to be really present and into -- you know, rehab can be very monotonous and boring and long kind of process.

But I just wanted to do everything possible I could to try to make sure that I wouldn't get hurt again. That was my main goal. It's like, I'm not getting hurt again. This isn't happening again. I became obsessed making sure I was getting better and healthy and I think that carried over into



every aspect of my career and my tennis.

Then I just worked really hard at it. I think I became a lot more confident in who I was around 24 years old. I was very confident with making my own decisions whereas I think when I was younger I would maybe not feel as comfortable making those decisions, whether it was my schedule or the practices or my matches, doesn't matter what it was.

I think I took ownership I think of my career, and I was really, like, this is what I'm going to do. If I mess up it's on me, but this is my decision. I think that really gave me a lot of confidence throughout the years of scheduling tournaments. I think all those things kind of played into my success.

It's a lot of different things, but yeah, it was definitely I think just maturity, too. I just kind of grew up, yeah, took ownership of all the aspects of my career.

**Q. A little bit off of that question, but you have a very good record against Camila and your first match was years ago in Lutz, I think, when you were...**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Florida?

**Q. Was that Florida?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** It was like a challenger, right? Was it or do they not count that?

**Q. It's on the thing...**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Do they count challengers?

**Q. Not technically in the official head-to-head.**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Where is Lutz?

**Q. That's what I was going to ask you. Tampa. I'm hearing Tampa.**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** I think it's a challenger. I vaguely remember playing her on a clay court and beating her there. It was a good win for me. She was like the 1 seed or something and I was younger.

That's what I mean, we go back to challenger days. We even played a lot in challengers. They probably don't even have all those on record.

**Q. What was challenger life like for you is my question, using that as a jumping-off point.**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** (Off mic.)

**Q. You're going around, but what was it like to be Jessica Pegula on the challenger tour?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** I honestly think it's harder on the Challenger Tour than when you actually get to the level here. Not that this still isn't hard but to a certain extent when you're on the Challenger Tour, everyone just wants to win so freaking bad, and they're trying to get out of there. Everything around you seems -- I don't know what it is. Plays into it.

It's, like, you're on the back court on a bad court, the umpire sucks, like, you're getting bad calls, there's coaching. There's all these things that, like, don't happen here that I think levels everybody out. No matter how good you are, it kind of balances everyone to where you're, like, on the same playing field.

Because it's like all this random stuff happening. You know, rain delays, there's nowhere to go, you're at a little clubhouse, and the schedule is not out and there's no practice courts and there's no balls. It's like everything evens everyone out in a way, which makes it really, really hard.

Then I feel like when you get here, I don't know, it's -- it's not that girls don't want to play. All it takes is one girl doesn't want to show up that day or she's sick or she's tired or she just came off a good rule result and then someone pulls out and then you win one good match and you're in the third round. You're like, okay, this isn't as hard as I thought it was. Not saying that happens every time, it could be the opposite.

But I don't know, it's just different. I think it's -- I think it's harder being out there.

**Q. Seeded third, ranked third, and yet so much of the talk about American women winning here is focused on your doubles partner. Do you have any reaction to that? Does it give you incentive, or do you laugh at it or it's nothing?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** I don't know. Maybe it's good (smiling). Coco can take it, that pressure, not me. I don't know.

No, I mean, I don't mind. She's been winning a lot. I think she deserves a lot of that attention. She's obviously very young. She's been playing really well. She's super electric to watch. She loves the crowd. Loves New York.

No, I don't really have a preference. Either way I think I

just want to continue to win matches and do the best that I can. Yeah, I mean, I don't know. It's like it's fun that -- it's nice that even though I am the top American, I can't imagine carrying a ton of pressure if it was only me.

It's nice that there is a lot of us that are doing well and that have chances to go deep here. Because at the same time, yeah, I don't think I'd -- I mean, I'd take it, but at the same time it's kind of nice too not feeling like I have to be the one that has to win the US Open when there's six other girls that could do it. So that's nice, I guess.

**Q. When you were speaking before about your maturity and different aspects of your development, how has your view and processing of winning and losing changed as you have gotten older? What is it like now when you do have a rough match and lose?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah, that's a good question. Yeah, when I look back and think about how I used to approach matches, I think I just freaked out way too much and made everything such a big deal.

But when you start winning and you start putting yourself in those situations, you realize how it's not that big of a deal. Like, it's a big deal, but when you're out there, you're much more relaxed, you're calm, you're making decisions.

I definitely would be the one when I was younger in those matches to get caught up in my frustration if something wasn't working. I didn't really know how to problem solve or how to change my game plan or how to play with the score and play with the momentum.

Like those are all things I really had to learn and come by. That's why, I mean, when I look back at some of my old matches when I was younger, I'm, like, what was I even thinking? I don't know what I was doing, because I'm, like, now it's so much different.

Honestly probably just played really stupid when I was younger. I just didn't play smart at all. I was completely the opposite of what everyone thinks I am now, which is hilarious.

Yeah, I would say, and then approaching losses when you're younger, the losses seem, if you think a match is a super huge deal, when you lose, it's like the worst day of your life and it feels horrible.

I think now still like there are tough losses where it's really, really, really hard but I'm able to bounce back a lot quicker and I'm able to just one day, okay, I'm upset, maybe two. I'm able to flip the switch and be like, all right, what do I need to work on, what do I need to change? What can I

get better at? I think that's where when I was younger I don't know if I really went into that thought process that quick.

I would work hard but I don't think I would mentally get over it. Like I wouldn't be able to flip it and go, okay, now I need to improve. It was more, I can't believe I blew that match, or I can't believe I had those chances and I lost it. I don't know how I'm going to win. It would be much more negative kind of a thought process.

Yeah, I'm just -- I don't know. It's so different. I'm just a different person. Like, the thought process is just so different. Of course there are still really, really tough losses that are really hard. But yeah, I don't know, I'm able to kind of bounce back and go back to the drawing board and figure it out.

Yeah, when I was younger, I'm not sure. I think I would just get too upset when I lost those matches.

**Q. In terms of the camaraderie that you were mentioning before, just not having to be the single focus of the nation, which a lot of other players are, I'm curious if that rooting interest that you seem to have, not just you but all the American players for each other, is that just pure national pride, or is that, like, friendships from up the ranks? Seems like a very different vibe on the ATP and WTA side of the American crew right now.**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** What does it seem like? Good vibe?

**Q. Yeah. In years past, it's been a little more competitive sometimes in pockets, and, you know, that sort of thing. Seems like people are getting along. Maybe I'm wrong.**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** No, we are. We definitely all -- well, I think that's what it is. I think we all get together and all train together and practice together. I don't know why. Maybe it's this generation of players, but yeah, I think we all genuinely are friends and we practice together and we still want to beat each other, but it's nice for us to see other people.

I think we have kind of embraced the fact that even though we are all competing for rankings and tournaments, and even if you play each other, you want to beat each other, you're pushing each other at the same time. I think that's something that I think the guys are doing well with Fritz, Paul, Tiafoe. Like, you see them pushing each other and they are all going higher and higher and higher.

Again, I don't know if it's something you're consciously

thinking of, but it's definitely happening. I could that with Coco and I, we have kind of come up the ranks together. I mean even though we have a big age gap, but at the same time, we are at the same kind of area of our career, did well in doubles together.

Then even this summer, she won D.C. and played a great match. Then I beat her, and I felt like that gave me confidence to win the tournament. I think her seeing me win the tournament gave her confidence to win Cincy.

I think those are just little things when you practice with someone a lot and you're around them and have a good mindset and you're pushing each other, yeah, when you see each other -- I even remember when I was hurt, watching all the American girls do well, I'm, like, Oh, I beat them in practice. I could be doing the same thing.

So I think you kind of, you do, there is a little edge of pushing each other as well. I think that's something we are all kind of doing, but at the same time, we're all pretty good friends and get along really well too.

Yeah, I feel like it is. It's a good vibe right now. I hope we can have good success at this tournament for sure.

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