

# US OPEN

Monday, September 4, 2023  
New York, New York, USA

## Jelena Ostapenko

### Press Conference

J. OSTAPENKO/I. Swiatek

3-6, 6-3, 6-1

**THE MODERATOR:** Jelena, what clicked for you after the first set? What was the difference?

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** I felt like first set I didn't play bad, but I was rushing a little bit. I was missing by like 10, 15 centimeters, not so much.

The main thing, I was staying aggressive and playing my game. I started to feel much better my game in the end of the second set and especially in the third set.

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions, please.

**Q. You now have a chance to reach the semifinals for the first time in five years. How is your perspective different today on going deep in majors than six years ago?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** I mean, I was just practicing really hard before U.S. swing, and also before here. I felt like I was playing a lot of tournaments quite well, but some moments here and there were not working. I still kept trying and kept working.

I feel like now my game is getting back in place and I'm playing more free, in a good way, and not thinking too much. So, yeah, I'm just really glad with the win today.

**Q. What are your thoughts on facing Coco?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** Of course, it's going to be a very tough match. She's a great young player. I played her in Australia. It was a great match.

I will try to focus on myself and enjoy it. It's great to be in quarterfinals, especially here in New York.

**Q. You have a good history against Iga. How much was that on your mind going into this match?**



**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** I mean, I knew she's a great player and she's very, very consistent, especially last few years. I also knew she would have all the pressure because she's obviously No. 1. I think if she lost against me today she loses the No. 1 spot. I was just trying to make it hard for her and to play my game and to fight until the very last point.

I knew there will be moments when I have chances, and I waited for them. Second set 4-1, 4-3, a little bit tricky. I was still playing and I was fighting. Yeah, I think I dominated in the end of the match.

**Q. What is it about the big stage, the big players, you always seem to find yourself playing your best when the spotlight is on you?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** I mean, I just honestly love to play on big courts with full stadiums and a lot of crowd. It's really the thing that we are working for and playing for. I think it's a great atmosphere.

Yeah, I mean, I had nothing to lose today. I knew it was going to be a tough match. I was ready for a battle. Yeah, I'm really glad, even the first set I couldn't find my game that way, but I was fighting and trying to find my game and be aggressive. In the end I managed to win the match.

**Q. On Iga's game, did you see anything different in terms of how you remember her playing Dubai last year, something like that? Anything you had to adjust to?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** For sure she was more consistent. I saw all the matches that we played, of course, before the match today. I was analyzing the game. I pretty much knew what to do against her.

The thing was that, as I said, first set I was missing little bit here and there and the set went not my way. At the end I managed to win it. I actually didn't have that many unforced errors today, so pretty happy with that (smiling).

**Q. You talked about the matchup, the first strike that makes her uncomfortable also against Sabalenka, Rybakina, Krejčíková, talk about how comfortable you are with her serving that big, how you're able to read her strokes?**



**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** I mean, yeah, a lot of times she was serving in my body. Obviously of course I realized it during the match and I was ready for t.

She improved her serve. It's much stronger now. As I said, I was ready for this and I think I'm returning pretty well, so that's not a big problem for me.

Yeah, I think the main thing is that she doesn't really like to play against big hitters. The three girls and me. She likes to have some time. When I play fast, aggressive and powerful, she's a little bit in trouble.

**Q. Talk about the Latvian support, your coach, what is that relationship like?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** I mean, my team is really amazing. They were supporting me so much. All of them are very special for me. Yeah, they were believing in me all match. I'm really grateful to have them here.

**Q. Only 20 unforced errors in the match. There were times where when you did make an error, you looked at your team frustrated. What was the difference in this match today in terms of regaining your composure compared to other matches?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** It's not bad stats comparing to 80 unforced errors and winning match. I mean, I'm improving probably round by round (smiling).

Yeah, I mean, even as I said first set I couldn't really find my game that well. Honestly, it's a good stats. The main thing, again, I was trying to go for the shots. Maybe today in the second and third set I was a little bit more consistent and didn't go for, like, crazy shots. I was going for shots when I had a chance of doing that.

Yeah, I think it was working pretty well.

**Q. You served really well today. She's a great returner. How pleased were you with that? How much work has gone into improving your serve?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** Of course, I was working a lot on my serve. It's completely different serving in the matches and serving at practice. You can serve unbelievable in practice, but then you go on court, you have a little pressure, you completely serve different way.

I didn't serve well in the first set when I broke her serve first game. In the third set when I was 5-0 up, I knew I would have more chances because I was obviously 5-0 up. So, yeah...

In general, I was really happy with the percentage of my serve, the way it was working today.

**Q. You mentioned you hit 80 unforced errors in a previous match. How different did you feel in that match compared to in this match?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** I mean, it's so much different because obviously top players, you see how they play, and you know them very well. But the girls, you don't really know well, they are very new to the tour. You see some highlights how they play, some matches you analyze, still you don't see them that often.

Maybe first few times it's more difficult to play against them because you don't really see their game that much. You kind of don't know what to expect.

But, as I said, first few matches of the Grand Slams, they're probably the trickiest ones. Yeah, I feel like round by round I start to play better.

**Q. You spoke about how all of the pressure was on Iga; you felt like you had nothing to lose tonight. Do you feel that same way going in against Coco? How do you feel about facing the American who draws the biggest crowds here?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** I mean, that's what it is. She's playing at home. I mean, it's normal. The crowd is going to be for sure, like, supporting her a lot.

But I think that's fine because she's playing at home. Of course, it's going to be a tough match. But I'm going to, again, as I said, focus more on myself and on my game, recovery, tomorrow practice, be ready for the next one.

**Q. What did you think about the first set that you lost? How were you able to regroup? Does winning by way of a comeback make it even more special?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** First set I felt like I was really into the match. Sometimes when you want to win so much, you go on the court and you kind of try to play really well, but then something doesn't go your way and you get little bit upset.

But, of course, as I said, she was playing really well. I didn't play against her for I think a few years, maybe year and a half. I needed little bit time to adapt and see how she improved and what she did.

There were some key moments in the second set. When I won it, especially the first game in the third set when I

broke her, I felt like it's going more my way. I started to feel my game better. I put her under the pressure, of course, because I was hitting quite many winners, and she didn't like the power I was giving her because she needed some time to play.

As I said, she's a great player. It's also not easy for her to play under such a big pressure, especially she had to win to stay No. 1. Yeah, it's never easy to be as a favorite. But she's a great player.

**Q. How would you describe your journey from when you were a major champion until today?**

**JELENA OSTAPENKO:** I mean, when I won Grand Slam, I said it already many times, my whole life changed and I needed time to adapt to all that. That wasn't easy because at that time I was 19 years old, turning 20.

I was expecting that I can win a Grand Slam, but not at such an early age. Of course, it's really difficult to get used to all this attention, pressure. Everybody expects you to win every single match, every single tournament. This is not possible because you are human and you cannot win every single match.

I needed little bit time. I think it took me little while to get used to that. I feel now I'm more mature. Again, I start to feel in a good way, more loose when I play, I don't think too much and I just enjoy it.

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