

# US OPEN

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New York, New York, USA

## Jessica Pegula

### Press Conference

M. KEYS/J. Pegula

6-1, 6-3

**THE MODERATOR:** Obviously not the result you wanted. Have you had time to reflect, and if you have, give us your quick overview of this afternoon.

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah, I thought Maddie played lights out, I thought, like, serving, returning, hitting the ball so clean. I mean, she was painting the back of the line. I mean, there really wasn't that much I honestly could have done.

I don't think I played my best, but at the same time she never really gave me a chance much to get back in it. Every time I felt like maybe there was a window, just wasn't happening.

I think it was a combination of things. But honestly, I mean, we all know how she can play. She's still a huge threat when she can play like that.

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions, please.

**Q. With the roof being closed today, was that something where you thought the conditions allowed that extra step for her with how she can get on fire?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** For sure. I thought the roof being closed, even though I know she kind of likes maybe a little quicker, as well, gives her so much time to set up. Especially with her forehand and with her big serve, she can hit through the conditions.

To me, with the roof closed, I don't know, that's something honestly the last year or two I've really struggled with. When it's a slow hard court and the roof is closed, the ball doesn't go anywhere for me. I think I have to really overexaggerate being aggressive. That wasn't something I was able to do today. She wasn't really letting me do, as well.

I think it gave her a lot of time to really set up and go for



her shots. She started making them right away. I think she's definitely a confidence player. When she got on a roll, she was able to keep it going.

To me, I think it favored her just with her heavy groundstrokes and serve.

**Q. The depth of shot, with the roof being closed, you still feel it's hard to get the tension point on your racquet?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah, I don't like it. I like it when it's faster and it's hot and the ball's kind of skidding through the court.

I hit pretty flat. I'm able to change the direction and kind of get the ball to skid on people. When it's kind of sitting up and I can't feel like I can hit through the court, then my ball is landing too short, and my serve is not going through the court, it gets really difficult.

That's something I'm going to have to figure out because it's been a couple times now where I felt like that. At Wimbledon, the roof closed, it got heavy against Marketa. Australia against Vika, it got really heavy. I felt kind of similar in all those situations.

That's something I'm going to have to figure out because now that I'm playing on these bigger courts, there's roofs, everything seems to kind of be slowing down a little bit in general with the balls and the courts and the conditions. Yeah, I'm going to obviously have to figure that out.

Yeah, the depth wasn't there, and she was able to really step in and play really aggressive.

**Q. Marketa was here earlier. She pulled out of the doubles. She attributed arm injury to the balls and the heaviness of the balls. There's a lot made about the change. Do you think from a players council perspective that will be revisited? What is the overview on that?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah, I think it's being revisited right now because I believe the US Open puts in their order next year before the end of the tournament. So, like, last year when we decided to trial it, the decision was made I think during the second week. So we're talking about that now.



I think obviously the players' health is the most important. That's definitely something we're going to look at.

Yeah, it's hard when you're trialing and you only have a couple weeks. That's not a lot of time for people to adapt and get used to.

Personally, I don't know, I joke with the council because I feel like I don't like any of the balls, so I just kind of took myself out of it. Was like, Guys, I don't know, I hate all the balls (smiling).

Yeah, it's something we're going to have to look at. Not just us, but we look at everybody. I think we did a survey for the whole tour. It's not like we're just making that decision. It's based off of what the players are leaning towards.

Player health is probably the main priority there.

**Q. Would it be crazy to use the same balls at least by surface over the course of a season?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** The ball issue is so elaborate. Like, we also learned, too, last year that sometimes they can come from different manufacturers, sometimes they're made differently.

In Cincinnati they didn't use a typical hard court, they used a different surface, which was like skinning the balls to going really, really small. In Montreal, they're all Extra Duty. They were fluffing up like this in two minutes. There's so many elements.

They play different based on the conditions, the court surface, where they're coming in, what country you're in, who's playing with them. It literally is all over the place.

I think what we just want is something more consistent. Hopefully we can get there. I don't know. Again, it's such a complicated, annoying topic. The amount of time we spend talking about the balls is insane. But there's so many elements.

Of course, tournaments that want sponsors, they get paid more money to use those balls, that's what they're going to use because that's how they're going to make money. There's a lot of elements that go into it.

The majority of us would like to see more consistent balls, not switching from week to week where you're in different conditions and using different types of balls. Just something that's more consistent is where we're just trying to start on.

**Q. As someone who has been elbowing alongside Aryna and Iga, what you make of the switch of Iga's tenure up top and Sabalenka taking over?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah, it's kind of crazy. Coco and I talked about it in doubles. We're like, It's kind of weird because, I mean, Iga still made second week, she's still been going deep in every tournament and doing well. It wasn't enough to keep her there. That's crazy.

Coco is like, I don't know what more she could have done?

I was like, I guess win the tournament again. That's it.

It's hard when Aryna has had good results in all of the slams and a lot of the big tournaments. Yeah, I think it's well-deserved. I think she's been knocking on the door for quite a while.

It's nice to see that change and see her get rewarded for how well she's been playing, her consistency, especially in the slams.

**Q. You referenced the conditions and how you'll need to reflect on them, given the three occasions you've had where they've worked against you. Obviously nobody wants to break the ceiling of the quarterfinals more than you. Now that the Grand Slam season in singles is over for you, will you reflect on it and plan differently than maybe you have in the past, or whether you feel this is the level that you are going to be putting out there, and sometimes you're just going to run into a Madison Keys hitting like that. Is there more you feel you can do?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah, well, I think the condition thing, I mean, I'm always looking and keeping some door open for not changes but ways to improve and to get better. So that's something, whether it's my racquet tension or the strings that I'm using or just a different mindset. I don't know what it is.

For the conditions, like, I'm always going to be thinking about that. At the same time, yeah, sometimes you do just run into a Maddie Keys. I feel like, again, she doesn't get enough credit. She's a great player, a slam finalist, multiple time semifinalist. I think she's a bigger hitter on tour than a Sabalenka or an Iga or even a Rybakina. I mean, she's right there if not more powerful.

She's been playing great this year. Again, yeah, she's hot. She could for sure win the tournament. I don't know, I feel like that gets lost. I feel like people kind of forgot about her, but she's still really good.

But, yeah, there are days like that. So I think it's a combination. Yeah, I mean, she played great, and there's nothing you can do. Then there's also room to always improve and try to get better.

I always have that window open of making little changes and adjustments. Nothing major. Just little by little. I think you have to if you want to stay at the top.

**Q. In terms of ways to keep improving, you talked about how much you think your doubles is helping, I think you've played over a hundred matches this year, both singles and doubles. We've not seen that many players win slams in singles that are playing that many doubles matches. Is that something you think you might reconsider at one point or do you think you're going to keep playing the doubles?**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** I mean, I don't know. Everyone asks me this question. It's like, yeah, I want to do well in both. Yeah, sometimes it would be great to conserve energy based on the schedule. But the scheduling has been okay this week, so I felt okay.

I like to keep playing and keep winning. It's hard to say. Like, I could have pulled out of doubles and still got my ass kicked today and it wouldn't have made a difference.

I don't think me yesterday even playing mixed, I was going to see how today went, whether I'd stay in mixed. Me going out and playing an hour and a half of mixed was not the reason, like, I had 20-something unforced errors today. It's just not.

I understand, like, the thought process of trying to focus on singles. I mean, I don't know. I guess I just make a decision on what I want to do and I stick to it, and that's my deciding factor.

I guess some people maybe see the other way, but I see a lot of benefits, as well. I think it's made me a lot better player. I think it just depends on my energy levels.

Obviously mixed is only at slams. I didn't play Wimbledon. But it was something here just to keep in the draw. You never know what could happen.

Doubles, yeah, we want to win slams, which is the thing. I think we want to do well at the Olympics next year. I mean, yeah, it depends on how we're doing in singles. If we're both going deep and we've had really long days, we're like, Okay, this isn't worth it, then we can pull out.

At the same time we maybe would like to play less in other

events if that's ideal, which we did kind of this summer. But then the slams, you want to win the slams, too. I don't know. We go back and forth. But I think it's very week to week and depending on how we feel.

Were you guys the ones that tweeted that I cried when I walked off the court? Weren't you guys the tennis podcast?

**Q. Yeah.**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Okay. Someone said I walked off the court in tears. I most definitely was not crying. I'm pretty sure that was from you guys. I don't know if you tweeted it exactly. I definitely wasn't crying, so...

It just sounded really sad. I definitely wasn't crying. I just got waxed in like an hour. I got to go play doubles in an hour. I was like, Okay. Anyways...

**Q. We know she hits the ball great, but her adding a little bit more to her defense, the dropshots she hits, is that the best version you're seeing of her? In doubles today, a good win against a good team. You and Austin have a fine partnership. Your assessment on how you're playing in doubles, as well.**

**JESSICA PEGULA:** Yeah, Maddie has added some other elements to her game. I'm laughing because sometimes when I practice with her and she tries them, we all know it's not her game. But she is adding stuff in and she hits some good slices and some dropshots. I don't know if they're dropshots. If she saw this, she would laugh. They're kind of like the short slice thing.

But, yeah, I think she's been trying to add stuff in. I can definitely see that. Her defense was good today, and definitely won her some points and surprised me a little bit.

Yeah, going into doubles, I'm excited. We still want to do well in the tournament if we can. It's just another chance. I'm a competitive person. I am here entering the events because I want to win them, not just for the hell of it.

Hopefully we can go out there, whether it's with Coco or Austin, we can keep the momentum going. It's been fun.

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