

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

Sunday, March 28, 2021

Miami, Florida, USA

## Jessica Pegula

Press Conference



J. PEGULA/Ka. Pliskova

6-1, 4-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. I just want to get your thoughts on the match. Tough three-set match. Pretty much a big upset today against Pliskova?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. Well, I played her a lot the last three weeks, three tournaments. I definitely knew what to expect. I kind of expected her to play well there. Even when I was up I still felt like she could easily come back just because she plays so aggressive and she serves well.

So I knew it could switch at any second, and it did. She played really well, and maybe I got a little passive, but I think mentally it was more mental today in that third set to come back and to break, hold and break was pretty big.

I thought I stepped it up and hit some good winners, too. Just happy I was able to get through it mentally.

**Q. Your next match you'll be playing Maria Sakkari. You want to give me your thoughts on that match?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I haven't played her in a while. I think we played on grass, and I think she killed me (smiling).

Yeah, I'm playing much better now. I know she's been playing pretty well and kind of solidified her as a really good top player, dangerous, amazing athlete. Yeah, it will definitely be tough.

I know she's a warrior, she's gonna battle, not give it away. Just going to be another tough match tomorrow. Yeah, I'll be ready for it.

**Q. Having played Karolina three times now this season, how important was it to be able to use the acquired knowledge from having beaten her twice in the Middle East swing to be able to go out there and be successful again today?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, it was definitely a different feeling, you know, beating her this time. It was tougher. She played better.

I think too it's just -- you know, maybe I was not expected to win but, you know, I beat her the last two times. It's, like, Okay, can you do it again?

Definitely maybe a different kind of pressure that way, but I knew kind of what I had to do and how to play. I played really well I thought up to a set and 4-1, and then I thought she definitely picked up her game. Maybe I missed a few first serves and she took her chances when she had it even from 4-1 down and she was fighting.

So definitely different than the last few matches we played, and I expected that, because obviously she's a top player and a lot of experience, done very well.

Again, just happy to kind of get through that in the third set mentally and be able to step up my game when I needed to.

**Q. You're part of what I would consider a really talented group of U.S. players that are on tour, a particular generation that would include, you know, Sonya Kenin, Jen Brady, Coco Gauff, and yourself. How do you feel that you fit in among the current generation of U.S. players? Are you cool with the fact that maybe you're not as much of a household name amongst the average tennis fans as some of the others?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I mean, I don't mind flying under the radar. I don't think anyone really minds that because there is not as much pressure.

You know, I'm glad that I have started to be maybe recognized a little bit more for my game and my results lately, just, you know, proved to myself and other people that I have worked really hard and had a lot of good results this year.

Yeah, it's definitely maybe different obviously behind some of those other girls, and even though they are younger they



inspire me, as well. They inspire me to see how fearless they are at such a young age.

I was not like that, and everyone's journey is different, so I know everyone gets there their own way. But it was great to see them do well. It definitely gave me confidence that I could do well too.

**Q. Have you been able to kind of stop and savor what's happening right now, just results-wise? Obviously AO quarterfinal, back-to-back semis in the Middle East, and now after a little bit of a break seemingly picking up where you left off. Can you savor it, or are you plowing through and just keeping your head down at the moment?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I think a little bit of both. Definitely my loss to Mertens in Dubai was tough. I was up a set, 5-2, match points, and I got killed the third set.

So it was actually not nice, but that's happened a lot the past few weeks or so where people have been up and had match points. That made me feel a little better that it happens a lot more and it wasn't like this terrible thing.

But I think mentally I have been really happy with how I bounced back from that in these first two matches, and especially today when I was up a set and 4-1 and I for sure had thoughts of that again, but, you know, mentally fighting through that in the third really helped.

So I think right now I'm kind of just savoring a bit, like after that loss I was, like, Okay, listen, I have done really well, but at the same time this week I just wanted to keep doing what I have been doing, competing well and trying to play good tennis, especially for really the last hard court event for a while.

**Q. Is there a sense of being I guess curious about what you can do, you know, at every single one of these big events that you're playing and being put into maybe newer positions than you have maybe experienced before? Is there a curiosity of, "I wonder if I can do this," or is your mentality more of, "I can do it"? You know what I mean? How does your mind work?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I think I'm definitely more on the "I can do it" right now. Maybe before it was more curious, which I think is normal and natural and something everyone has to go through.

But I think I have definitely found a new kind of depth of self-belief where I can say, Okay, I can do this. Obviously I'm not expecting to win the tournament every time. I'm

trying to take it, you know, one match at a time I think is what works best for me.

But when I go out there, I'm just trying to think of, like, I can do this, I know how to play. I cannot just win but I can figure it out when things are going wrong. I can figure it out when I'm maybe not feeling that great or I feel a little slow and sluggish.

I think I have definitely, yeah, been more of an "I can" than a "Oh, maybe, we'll see."

**Q. I just wondered if you could talk a little bit about your coach, David Witt and how he's helped you?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, David has been great. I have kind of said before I think he's kind of given me more confidence, especially when I started working with him, helping me kind of believe in myself.

He's pretty laid back but he's also pretty matter-of-fact. You can do this, you can do this, you can play like this, you can step into the court more, you can get your serve better.

It's been very, I don't know, like I guess matter-of-fact the way he says it where I think it's given me a lot of confidence.

And too I think we have just been chipping away on a lot of stuff, serve, coming in, even scrapping out a few points, playing smarter, and definitely I think the last few months we have definitely done a lot more strategy, which I like, which I really embrace and playing a lot smarter.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports