

# Miami Open presented by Itaú

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Miami, Florida, USA

## Jessica Pegula

Press Conference



J. PEGULA/S. Stephens

6-1, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: (Off mic.)

JESSICA PEGULA: It was a tough match, obviously always playing Sloane. And playing her second round isn't always easy. It was my first match, since I had a bye, so that also makes it a little bit more nerve-racking, I feel like. Then playing a fellow American. We're going to go play Fed Cup soon. Just a little awkward. Not awkward in a bad way but awkward I haven't played, and it's just kind of a weird feeling.

I'm glad it's over with, glad I got the win. I thought I played pretty well today.

**Q. Yeah, it's always difficult to play your friends and teammates. Can you tell me, you live in Boca Raton?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yes, I live in Boca.

**Q. Do you have a place in Buffalo, or is that just with your parents?**

JESSICA PEGULA: My parents have a place there. I don't really go up there that much. Tennis-wise, it's not the greatest. They are back and forth a lot more than I do. Yes, they do have a residence there, as well.

**Q. Do you feel weird in this stadium? This is kind of your enemy stadium.**

JESSICA PEGULA: I know. It is weird. I find out I had a suite today, which is kind of funny. I don't know why, because I have been here in the suites for the games and stuff like that. I have been on field for the games.

It's funny being on field. It feels so different, like we use it as our warmup kind of lounge area, and this year they have the stadium set up. Last year they didn't have the center court.

Yeah, super weird, like being on the field. It feels so much

different when it's not a game. It feels smaller, I think.

**Q. So you're literally on the football field?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, I am on the football field, yeah.

**Q. Lifelong Bills fan, so you probably hated the Dolphins?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I wasn't really a lifelong Bills fan. Yeah, I think most people know that. We grew up in different areas.

Sabres fan mostly, lifelong Sabres fan. Bills not as much. But, yeah, kind of funny, we are division rivals and they just made a huge trade. So, yeah, it's been kind of interesting.

**Q. Changing subjects, the top 10 from last year to this year, unrecognizable, eight players gone, retired, mental breaks, injuries. Do you feel like this may be the most open the women's tour has ever been in its history as far as no dominant player? Barty gone, the Williamses gone, et cetera.**

JESSICA PEGULA: I think so. It's probably open but in a sense where I think the depth is so much better. I don't think you're getting easy first, second, third rounds maybe that you did ten years ago, and I think that is a huge factor.

I think tennis, it's a global sport, I think girls are playing much younger, they're getting better much quicker, they're competing at a high level much faster, athleticism-wise is probably going up because more girls are playing. A lot of other factors I think go into that.

So when I say "open," I agree but I think it's just more of the depth. I don't know if anyone can really truly dominate. I think it's really, really tough.

Obviously Ash did that pretty well or Naomi on the hard courts. But, you know, again, it's just tough day in and day out. There is no easy matches at all.

**Q. What do you attribute some of these early retirements, these mental breaks, young players, Andreescu was dominating and she's been away. We**



**know about the other thing, Naomi, et cetera. What do you attribute some of it to? Is it tougher for a woman out there in the world maybe alone traveling or is it just -- any idea?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Well, I think a lot of those girls had breakthroughs when they weren't really, not anybody, but they weren't top players. So I think all of a sudden you go from, you know, being ranked 100 or happened to Andreescu and Raducanu and Leylah, they're not ranked that high and then all of a sudden they have a huge result, which is great because anything is possible, but at the same time, it's a lot of commitment. Especially nowadays with media, social media, all this stuff, all of a sudden you're having to do a million things that maybe you're not used to doing before.

I know even me, I have had to experience that as well. The last few weeks being in Indian Wells and Miami, I have had to do so much off-court stuff I'm not used to at all. It's exhausting and it's draining. Sometimes I think that can be a big difference and I think you have to learn to balance that.

I think maybe some of those girls it just takes time to learn how to balance it. I think the rest of your career you're probably always trying to do that.

Then of course injuries, the depth, playing every day week in and week out is so much tougher that I think it's just difficult to keep it going. It's just draining. Like we play all year round. It's crazy. No other sport does that. I think again with the women's sport, the depth right now, it's just hard to be consistent.

**Q. Also the money is so great. Barty has already made 24 million. Osaka, God knows how much she's made. Money is great too and maybe people want families. Who knows?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, there's a lot more to life than just tennis. I think sometimes people forget that. It's maybe only probably a quarter of our lives hopefully. Hopefully that we live long, it's probably only a quarter, and there is a lot more out there.

I think Ash was very commendable. I think everyone realized that. Everyone was like, Wow, what a way to go out like go out on top and just go do what you want to do. She did that before as well. It's not really a shock. I don't think anyone was really that shocked by that.

But again, I think she just kind of showed everyone that there is more out there, and don't forget that you can have another avenue and all that stuff. As long as you feel like

you gave it all for your career and you're happy, then you can always go a different route.

**Q. Sloane touched upon that with me. The pandemic has placed different priorities. There is life without tennis?**

JESSICA PEGULA: There is. There actually is, which is normal and healthy to have, and I think a lot of girls are realizing that. Maybe Bianca, Naomi realize, Wow, there is all this other stuff I'm really interested in.

I'm sure they're always thankful for tennis for getting those opportunities to be interested or be able to do something else outside the sport, but that's what makes it so great. It creates so many opportunities. I think you realize with what's going on in the world, there is a lot more important things, and people want to be with their families and enjoy their life.

**Q. Lastly, so much respect for you. We know your parents. Obviously the money. You had some struggles early in your career, injuries, things. What drives you? Obviously you don't have to work a day in your life. I imagine tennis is a passion?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Well, if I didn't work, I'd be very bored. People don't realize that, they're like, You don't have to work. I'm, like, What would I do all day?

I don't know. I just wasn't wired like that, I guess. Growing up, I guess I was just wired differently where I always wanted to be successful, and whatever it was, I feel like it's not just tennis, whatever I do off the court too, I want to be really good at it, I want to be the best at it, I want to work hard at it.

But I think honestly I think I just love the sport. I think I just have a lot of passion for playing. Yeah, I love to compete and be out there. It's so much fun for me, and I think at the end of the day most players that's what they are playing for.

You see the top players, they're not playing really for more money at the time. They have already made enough money. Look at Federer. He could have stopped a while ago and nobody would have blamed him. He says he loves the sport.

I feel like I have the same feeling. I'm very passionate about it and I love to compete and I love the challenge and the grind of doing that.

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