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**Tuesday, April 4, 2023**

THE MODERATOR: Jessie, how are you feeling ahead of the tournament here in Charleston after a strong run in Miami?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. I'm feeling, I think, confident. Confident, but obviously not having a lot of time on the clay, so it should be kind of interesting. Just practiced today for the first time on clay this year. So I guess we'll just see how that goes. But more or less, I feel like it's part of my game, like yeah, I have to be feeling pretty confident, having a great run in singles and then obviously winning the doubles as well.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. What's your feeling of coming back here having spent, I think -- I guess I'm not exactly sure what years you were here, and what maybe that version of you or that part of your life where you went through a lot of bumps and ups and downs, what that person would think about, I think, the World No. 3 sitting here as the top seed at this event thinks?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. It's pretty crazy. I think I was here before I got my hip surgery, so probably 2015 maybe, 2016. I spent a lot of time here, grew up in Hilton Head, South Carolina. That's really where I

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kind of really learned how to play tennis and started playing tennis at Smith Stearns Tennis Academy there. So I have a lot of ties down here. I have a lot of people that I know, friends from Hilton Head or just here when I used to live here as well. So feels like, again, I know I just came from Miami Open, which is home, but here also feels a little bit like home. It feels kind of more like my childhood and where I grew up as well, so it's really nice to come back, and the southern hospitality is always great. So it's a very nice, warm welcome.

Q. Would that version of you --

JESSICA PEGULA: Oh, sorry, your question. That version of me, yeah, it's crazy. I mean, I feel like two different people. I feel like I was going through such an interesting phase, kind of dealing with a hip injury, playing through it a little bit. I was also coming back from my knee surgery as well. So it was just, I think, a much different Jessie. I think I'm much more professional and I think confident now than I was, but definitely learned a lot in those couple years that I was here and training. And, you know, I was still on my own and living here with some friends. So it was just a really -- yeah, it was a fun experience that I was here training and helped me, I think, a lot to get to where I am right now.

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Q. Jessie, when you make a run like you made in Miami and actually won the championship in doubles, when you have to come here, do you have any kind of special preparation you make once you get here? Because you have to be very tired.

JESSICA PEGULA: I know. Definitely, I'm a little tired, but then at the same time, I think I'm still kind of in competition mode, which I think helps as well. It's one thing to have a quick turnaround, but I feel pretty good. Obviously singles I played a lot, doubles I played a lot, but I had a day off Saturday, just played the doubles final Sunday. I traveled here yesterday, and had another day off. So I don't feel super tired, drained. I think physically I still feel good. Like nothing is bothering me.

Q. What about mentally?

JESSICA PEGULA: Mentally I feel -- I mean I feel good. I feel confident that I did well in Miami. After this, I'm going home to play Billie Jean King Cup, so I think I'm looking forward to doing that. It's not like I have to fly somewhere else afterwards. So I think that really helps mentally, you know, feeling like I'm not going to have to drag through the next couple weeks. It's basically just to enjoy my time here, try to do the best I can with the turnaround. And it's such a great place to be, so even

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if I don't do well, I don't think I'm going to be that upset having to be stuck in Charleston. And then I get to go home. So I think mentally I actually feel -- I feel pretty good, and I'm hoping I can turn that onto the court and it'll help me win some matches here.

Q. First of all, congratulations on your doubles win with Coco. Can you just speak a little bit that tournament as a whole and what it's like to play with her?

JESSICA PEGULA: It was so much fun. I feel like every match we kind of had a lot of up-and-down matches. But we did such a great job, I think, dealing and adapting throughout those matches, and obviously I think our priority was always kind of singles, but to get out there and to play doubles and to win kind of like our hometown tournament, especially for her, someone who really grew up in Del Ray Beach in that area, I think, is really, really neat. And definitely I think more special than all the other 1000s we've won. And it was just fun. We came from behind a lot of matches, and even though it's doubles, I think that still translates into singles a lot, the way we were able to adapt and turn things around and keep positive energy the whole time, and when we were winning or losing, I think is important. I think that does transfer to the singles court as well. So it was a long couple weeks, but it was really fun and super rewarding in the end.

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Q. Recently, just back in February you opened up about more personal stuff, what's going on with your family, what's going on with your mom. How are you right now on that front? How is your family right now in that front? And how do you compartmentalize something like that and then going on to play tennis?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. Well, she's doing much better. Thank you for asking. You know, it's a long process through her recovery, but she's improving. It seems every time, you know, I get the experience of not being home that much and getting to see her improvements when I do come back because I'm not seeing her every day, which is nice because I notice a difference, for sure, of her improving and her getting better. So that's always nice to see, and even though it's a long process, all those weeks of her getting a little bit better just really add up. So she's doing much better, and yeah, it's tough on the road. I think now she's in a much better place where she's in a really good routine as far as her rehab and her recovery. So it's not as much chaos, where before it was a lot of chaos and not really knowing when I was on the road. But we have a lot of people that are really great at home and that we trust and we know are going to take care of her, so I think that helps make my job much easier. And, again, for me tennis has always been something that I love to do and kind of a stress

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relief, as I say. Even though it's stressful, it's something where I can focus on something completely different. And I don't know how, but I have always been good at just focusing on what I need to do, and then whenever I'm home or in that case, that situation, I can deal with that itself. But having the right people around you really helps.

Q. Jess, what does or doesn't change when you're the top seed? I know last year in DC you were the top seed. I don't know how many more times previous in your career, maybe at the lower levels, but when you come into an event like this, does that number mean nothing to you or when you walk out on the court, does it give you a little floating cake with a "1" on it?

JESSICA PEGULA: Honestly, I feel like I never have done that great whenever I'm seeded high. I don't know if that's good or not. No, but I think it's just, to me, it's a number. It's rewarding to see -- to be the top seed, to earn that spot is really special. Doesn't always happen all the time, especially playing on tour with everyone's ranking and the fields being so tough. Usually there's always people ahead of you, but it's nice that I've earned that top ranking spot. I know Sabalenka pulled out, but still, it's nice to earn that spot, and hopefully -- I mean, I don't think it means too much, just because I feel like it's tough for 1 seeds to always win the tournament. So to me it's just a number, but I think it's nice to take it as

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a nice little gold star next to your name, like yay, you've been doing a really great job. So to me that's kind of how I take it, and hopefully I can use that and turn it into some confidence this week.

End of Interview

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