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THE MODERATOR: Jess, crazy roller coaster match today. Can you just give us your overall takeaways when you were down 0-4 in that third set and how you came back?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yes. That was a pretty crazy match. Played a lot of crazy matches lately. I keep saying that's one of the craziest matches I've played, but then ever week keep saying the same thing. But, yeah, that was really a roller coaster. It was just tough. I mean, she started -- I played a couple sloppy games. She got back into that second set, and then she started playing well for a while, and then I kind of got frustrated, and then I played one good game and then she played a bad game, and then I was back in it. It was pretty much the exact same story like from the second and third, so I'm just glad I was able to come out on top of it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. I know you get asked this a lot, but what was going through your mind?

JESSICA PEGULA: Like dead serious, like what was going through my mind is I can't believe I've lost six games in a row, seven games in a row, eight, nine, ten. And then I was just like communicating that to my coach, like, oh, it's eight now, it'll probably be nine. Like it wasn't very positive, to be honest. Also, like that really hasn't happened to me in like a long time. Like I can't remember the last time I've been up like that and consecutively lost like that many games as well.

So I was just frustrated, but was able to kind of relax and played a pretty good game at 4-0. I knew if I could just get one game, like kind of stop the bleeding, that I think I had a chance to get back into it. But, yeah, it didn't come until that 4-0 game. And then the next game, I played like a

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good game, and then she played a bad game at 2-4, and then it just like switched really quickly. But, yeah, my thoughts weren't very positive for a few games there.

Q. How much did you feel like that crowd was able to back you? And what is your relationship when you're on court and you maybe need some energy, how do you sort of stay internal, but also accept the external for hopefully the best?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. I think, you know, you're kind of thinking like, wow, this crowd really wants me to win, but at the same time you're just like so frustrated with yourself. And then you kind of hit that point where you're like, wow, this is kind embarrassing as well. Like I can't win a game. Like this is been like 45 minutes. I'm not winning a game, like what's going on? So I think you hit a lot of different emotions as far as that side.

But, again, I think it helps a lot just because getting one game, I knew if I could get back into it, you get the crowd going like I did when I went up 5-4, I think the other person it weighs on them a lot, the opponent, and you kind of feel like the weight of all of it, like emotionally and mentally. So it definitely makes a difference, that's for sure, and I think it helps you. You want to do well for them because they're cheering for you.

Q. You said on court, and I think you wrote on the camera, "I'm tough."

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. "I'm tough." Yeah, because I was answering Andy's question.

Q. What does that mean to you? Where does that toughness come from and how has tough grown for you over your career?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. I definitely wouldn't say I was that mentally tough when I was a junior playing. I think it's something that I've had to learn and that has become like kind of a weapon for me. But I think if you want to be a top player, that has to be something -- you have to be pretty mentally tough. And not saying every single time you're going to win every single match, like, yeah, I was up a set and 4-0 and I lost ten games in a row. The ups and downs are going to come, but I think figuring things out and just staying with it and not rolling over and a lot of those little things that you have to be to be at the top of the game, and I've done that

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really well, especially this year. And it doesn't always go your way, but I think if you just keep that mentality that you're not just going to roll over, that it's not going to be easy no matter what, that weighs on your opponent, too. Like they're thinking, gosh, this girl just won't go away, because I've played people like that, too, where I'm just like, gosh, this girl just won't give me the match. Like I'm going to have to win this. And that's hard to do when you're playing someone like that. So I think all the top players have that kind of aura about them, and it's something I've had to work on and I didn't really get until later in my career, but I think, yeah, I think that is something that I'm good at now.

Q. What did David Witt say to you when you first met him off court?

JESSICA PEGULA: He just said, good job. He was just like, that was a crazy match. It was streaky. We were just going through like all kind of the big moments throughout the match. It was a set and 4-0, we switched balls, the ball kind of starts flying on me, I played two bad games. And we talked about just she played really well there for a string of games. Talking about losing all those games, how frustrated I was, having to let that go. And then, yeah, just the big moments, I think, throughout the matches and the swings is kind of what we talked about, but he was just like, good job. Like you hung in there and you were able to play some really good tennis. And I think even at the point when I was losing, I didn't feel like I was playing bad. Like I didn't feel like, oh, gosh, I can't make a forehand, I can't make a backhand; I can't do this. I felt like I was hitting the ball really clean and playing some good points. I just wasn't winning them.

So that was the takeaway. Like I still feel like I'm playing well. Even though that was a really kind of up-and-down match or streaky match, I still feel like I was hitting the ball really clean.

Q. Did you think about -- did you change your racquet during that time?

JESSICA PEGULA: I did.

Q. Did you go to a tighter string?

JESSICA PEGULA: I just went to a newer. It's the same racquet -- sorry, same tension. It was just a different

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racquet, which he said, maybe I should have done that at 4-0 when we switched balls and the balls were flying on me, but I get weird with my racquets. Like I've been playing with that racquet like -- I don't know. I keep going back to that racquet, so I didn't want to change, since literally since Miami. So it was just kind of funny that I switched at 3-0, I think, and then lost one game. So I don't know.

Q. The same racquet, all of Miami?

JESSICA PEGULA: I kept playing with other racquets, and I like always kept going back to that one, like this one felt the best. Like even in the Miami doubles final, like I switched to that one, and I know which one it is because my Yonex log fell off the butt cap of it. So it's just like this funny thing -- I have a new set of racquets after, before I go to the clay. So it's just funny, like this racquet, I don't know, it's one of those things I just keep using, but today I didn't use it finishing the match. So maybe that whole superstitious thing is gone now.

Q. So far this tournament, you've had two very different matches. As you're heading into the quarterfinals, kind of what are you going to focus on?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. Two very different matches. I think I play Paula; right? So I think I'm just going to -- I haven't really played her. I mean we played in Miami last year, but I think she was sick and we didn't really play a match, so I don't really count that. Obviously I know she likes the clay. She tends to play well here, too. So I mean it's going to be tough. I know she likes to make it really physical. I'm just going to kind of go through the strategy of what I have to do with my coach. And I mean, I feel like, again, I'm playing well and I should just take the momentum of the good streaks that I had today and try to take that into tomorrow, but it's going to be like a totally different match, just like the first two rounds.

Q. I mean you've been through many different iterations of being on tour and being in different positions. How do you see where Paula is right now, having been in the Top 5, Top 2 in the world? And when you fall back down, does it feel like you're playing with house money when you're playing a higher

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ranked player like you? Or how do you sort of manage those peaks and valleys?

JESSICA PEGULA: I don't know. I haven't really gone through kind of what she's gone through, right? Like she won Indian Wells, blew up really fast, had a tough year, was injured a lot. It was funny, I remember before she won Indian Wells, before, I think, COVID, I remember watching her play, and I was like, oh, gosh, this girl is going to be really good, and she ended up having a really good year that year. And I wasn't that surprised. She's big, strong, hits heavy ball, like heavier than I think most of the girls.

So, I mean, I think she had an amazing year, and it's just hard to sustain a lot of times. I think she had some tough injuries and stuff like that. And she's just trying to find her form, but I mean, she's played at the top level. She's won those big matches. So I don't think it's that different for her now. She's already been in those situations. It's not like it's a first-time situation. So she knows what she has to do, and she's experienced, and I don't think she'll feel nervous or weird or anything like that. But seems like she's been playing better. Seems like she's enjoying herself a little bit more out there on court, which I think looked like she was struggling with last year just as far as some tough losses and tough injuries. But I mean even she, I think, had a match point against Rybakina. So she's definitely playing well, and I know she likes the clay; it'll be tough. But I'm sure she's just trying to kind of play her way back into her old form, but tennis it's a long year. I'm sure she'll have some good results. I mean she's a good player, so I don't think -- yeah, I think her ranking will go back up.

End of Interview

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