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Friday, April 5, 2024

Jessica Pegula def. Victoria Azarenka
6-4, 3-6, 7-6(7)
Quarterfinal

MODERATOR: Jess, great match and great victory today. Can you just give us your thoughts on your emotions and how you were able to pull off that third set tiebreak?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. That was obviously a really crazy match, really, really crazy. But, yeah, I am excited that I was able to get through, kind of hold my nerve, barely, at the end there. But I was able to do it, and hopefully I can really use this match as a big confidence, kind of, builder and for momentum going forward and even for tomorrow.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your mindset going into that tiebreaker after leaving the match points on the table?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. I mean, to be honest, I wasn't feeling that great. It was really windy. I was like, ugh, I'm tight. It's windy. It's not helping. Like you don't want to make stupid errors, but you want to still kind of like play your game, and the wind amplifies the nerves like ten times, I feel like, because there's so many awkward, weird shots that you're hitting, especially with the serve, and you know, it's really tough, and I felt like she was pressuring my serve a lot, returning really well.

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So, yeah, when you already have chances and you let them slip by, it can be really tough to kind of get yourself back there, but was able to play actually like, okay, 3-3. She played a couple of good points, and then I was just trying to hang in there. I was like she might give you a double fault. You might be able to hang in there, get a free point on your serve, something, anything can happen.

But, yeah, I was just trying to not feel like I emotionally had given up. I think I was just trying to stay calm and be like, okay, let's just see what happens, and luckily that was good enough today.

Q. Now that you've had a few minutes, how aware were you -- the crowd was so with you through the whole thing. How aware of that are you and does that help you or does it add to the nerves?

JESSICA PEGULA: It can be both. I think it's really nice when they're helping you for you not to feel like you -- I don't want to say given up. But like, okay, like I can still do this, I can still do this. At any point in a match I think you feel that from the crowd.

You also want to like give them -- you know, they're paying to come watch you. I want to like give my maximum effort. You never feel good about -- I don't know if you're in a bad mood or you let your frustrations get you or whatever and you feel kind of overwhelmed and let's say you lose a match, and you kind of look back, it's like, wow, I played in a stadium full of people and they just watched me totally like lose my mind. Like that's not probably great.

So I think I always see that, and that can add pressure, but at the same time it can also really motivate you. So I definitely felt it, especially when we switched sides and I was up 6-6, they were really going crazy. So that was really fun. But at the same time I don't like to get too fired up because it can make my nerves worse. Some



people, I think, love the adrenaline and they love that they can like build off that. I am like not that type of person. Sometimes if I get too fired up or I feel like I'm too much with the crowd and trying to match their energy, that it can kind of do the opposite for me, and I feel like my energy kind of gets drained, and emotionally I kind of get drained. So I was trying to just stay like in between, which is what I usually try to do. So, yeah, it can help; it can hurt. I think just knowing that they're there kind of backing you is just really nice.

Q. After a match that was not only very -- or appeared to be very physically taxing, but also mentally taxing, what kind of recovery are you planning?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. I'm definitely going to do some stuff with the physios here, definitely get some food, get a really good stretch, good massage or flush, whatever it is I need treatment on, and just have a relaxing night, decompress.

Q. I'm also curious, do you do yoga?

JESSICA PEGULA: A little bit, yeah. Not like -- I don't know, I'm not like a Yogi, but I do have a lot of like yoga stuff that I incorporate into maybe my rehab or mobility or maybe my warmup. Yeah.

Q. In your experience, what does it take to put the hammer down and win these last two matches?

JESSICA PEGULA: I don't know. I mean, I think, again, I have to keep a good, obviously, attitude and mentality. I thought the way I started the match today from a set and 3-1 was really good. Like my energy was great. I was playing good. Even though I didn't break a couple of times, I was still like positive and whatever. And then I kind of let it slip today.



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So, I mean, I want to take, obviously, the good parts and then look at the parts I could have done better, and I think the good parts are I think I'm playing really well and I'm playing good tennis. And, again, I feel comfortable here. I feel comfortable on these courts, and I'm playing against a player that I have beaten before. Obviously that doesn't mean much, but I feel like I can go out feeling like I'm playing good enough tennis to win tomorrow.

And, secondly, I think just still working on not letting my lulls kind of get too down, not letting them string too many games together, and that's really tough when you're in the moment, but I think looking at today, how I was able to snap back at the start of the third was really important. So keeping that fresh in my mind going into tomorrow. If it feels like the momentum is switching -- or in the final, whatever match I play next -- that I can still hang in there and be right there with these girls and not to let my emotions or my frustration kind of take me down too far.

I think it's natural. It's normal to get frustrated, but just letting it kind of happen and then just being like, okay, resetting, moving on. So I think I can take the good and the bad from today, and hopefully, again, learn and use what I did well tomorrow, and hopefully it works out into the rest of the weekend, but, yeah, we'll see.

Q. When you're in a match like that in the moment, can you appreciate the drama and the level of play and how hard she's fighting? Can you appreciate all of that?

JESSICA PEGULA: Oh, of course. Yeah, I think at the end -- I know her very well. Obviously she's frustrated. She probably wants to like break all her racquets, whatever. I would, too. But I think at



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the end of the day, you can look and just be like, you know, that was a really crazy match.

And I've actually heard her, I think, say, too, in interviews where she's looked back and said in the moment I was really upset, but now maybe that she's older, she's like I looked back and I was like I maybe lost that match, but that was a great match. Like that was great level. That was great play.

So I think obviously it's harder to do that if you've lost the match. I've had matches like that where it's really tough, but I think, of course, you have to respect how much we both want it and how much we were both out there trying and nervous and fighting with our emotions.

And that's -- it's vulnerable, really, being out there and going through all of that. So it's pretty cool, and I think we both respect each other a lot. So I'm sure she will, at some point, and I know I definitely respect, I think, every opponent I play for putting ourselves out there and putting ourselves through it.

Q. You're 2 and 0 against Daria. What do you expect from her technically?

JESSICA PEGULA: I expect the same thing I always expect from Daria. She's just kind of a wall. Good, spiny forehand. I know she likes to look for that a lot. She moves pretty well. Her serve, same thing. She's going to put a lot of serves in, isn't going to go for a ton on her first serve. And you kind of know what you can get, but that can be frustrating when you kind of know what to do and maybe, I don't know, some days you can execute it, some days it's not as good.



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So I feel like I have a game plan in my mind based on past experiences, but you also never know what she's going to do. She might change something. Playing her on a different surface in a different place is a lot different than previous matches. Last time I played her was Tokyo, I think, on hard, super fast. So, I mean, that caters to me a lot more than it does to her.

So I think going into this match I'm looking at it a lot differently just it being on clay and the fact that she plays well here. But, yeah, kind of know what to expect. She plays pretty straightforward with her game. So it's just more me trying to execute what I need to do.