



WTA 500

Saturday, April 4, 2026

Jessica Pegula def. Iva Jovic
6-4, 5-7, 6-3
Semifinal Round

An Interview With Jessica Pegula

JESSICA PEGULA: Super excited to be in the finals tomorrow. Again, another really tough match, playing Iva. She was playing really good tennis, and I thought maybe I kind of snuck away with the first set. I think she started serving pretty well in the second set. So just wasn't returning, I don't think, great. But, yeah, I was able to come back there in the third.

MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. I know you're sick of talking about this three-set thing, but it also speaks to you as a player that you can solve problems and find your way out of holes. Just talk about that. You've gotta feel good about that.

JESSICA PEGULA: Definitely. It's become a strength of mine. And I kind of joked, maybe when girls get up a break in the third against me, maybe that's when they feel more pressure because I've been coming back at that time, even though it doesn't seem like it's a good time to come back. But, no, I think I've been doing a really good job of problem solving.

You know, I don't think I'm playing my best tennis either, and I think I've had to kind of find things that are working on the day and kind of find patterns that are working for me that day when the rest of my game maybe isn't there or certain shots aren't there. So I think that's something I've been doing really well this week.

But, yeah, I've definitely been having to problem solve and compete really is the only thing I feel like I've been doing really well this week.

Q. And tell us what you know about Yuliia Starodubtseva.

JESSICA PEGULA: I don't really know much. I've seen her play maybe a few times. And I know her. I've seen her around, obviously. But it seems like she likes the clay. Super crafty. Seems like she's a good athlete.

She played pretty lights out today, it seems like. I'm kind of taking a mental just couple hours before I have to tap into kind of maybe watching some of her matches and see what she's done really well and what she's been doing here too.

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Kelly A. McKee
Savannah Court Reporting, Inc.
Savannah, GA
kadmcr@yahoo.com



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But, yeah, I've never played her, never practiced with her, so it's definitely going to be tough, of course, playing somebody like that.

Q. Congratulations.

JESSICA PEGULA: Thank you.

Q. I see Iva as a high-risk player, and I was curious if it was a strategic decision to perhaps alternate between extending rallies to extract errors as well as drawing her in since you were passing exceptionally well.

JESSICA PEGULA: I think a little bit. I think my game I definitely like to draw errors from my opponents. I think sometimes I can hit really hard and kind of flat through the middle. And sometimes, even though it may seem like not an amazing strategy to some people, but I think with the way that I hit the ball, it definitely forces someone who is very good. She's really good at kind of taking time and space away, and I think sometimes when you can force somebody to have to go for things that they're necessarily not comfortable with, then that can be a very good strategy, and that's something that I use against a lot of players.

But I do think against someone like her, she definitely likes pace, I think, and you could tell that when I hit kind of the same ball over and over again, she would start to play better.

So there was definitely a balance of kind of having to jam her up the middle, but then as soon as I could, try and move her and maybe force her to go for something that she didn't want to go, and then obviously you're on clay. So you do want to open the court and move people around.

So it's always finding a very fine line and balance of being able to execute that.

Q. And I also saw you using the moon ball a little bit and lobbing a lot.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah.

Q. I think to just change it up, and I thought that was very successful.

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. Thank you. I tried.

Q. You said on the court that she's going to be a superstar. What impresses you about Iva?

JESSICA PEGULA: I think it's her mentality and maturity. She's already a very good player, but I do think that, in this sport, being able to stay very poised and mature, especially for her age and where she's at and how everything is so new, she seems to be handling it exceptionally well.

So I think that is definitely something that sticks out to me as far as like, okay, this girl is here to stay. I don't think there's going to be a lot of ups and downs with her as far as her mentality and how she's playing, and I think that is in itself something -- sometimes it takes -- it took me a really long time to learn, takes some people a long time to learn. I feel like she already has that, so I think that's going to take her very far, especially at this young age.

Q. I heard that you've added something like eight miles an hour to your serve speed since last year.



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JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. I've heard that. It's funny because it wasn't --

Q. Probably heard it from the same person.

JESSICA PEGULA: It wasn't really like super intention as far as like I wasn't necessarily working on it. I'm always working a little bit on placement and getting my serve bigger, but it kind of just happened naturally with all the stuff that we've been working on.

I haven't really changed much, to be honest, as far as using my legs or my motion. It's really more just, I think, using my hand.

And I have a pretty live arm. And so I've always thought my serve could be much bigger for my size, because with my arm being pretty live for all tall I am. So I've always kind of been like why isn't my serve bigger. So we've had to figure out certain ways to kind of tap into that. And, yeah, I don't know. It's worked, I guess.

Q. Chris Evert posted on social media that she's watched you this week, and that she's convinced you have magical powers. What's your reaction to Chris?

JESSICA PEGULA: Well, that's very nice of Chrissie to say that. I don't know. Yeah, I guess my super power for this week is, I don't know, maybe my stamina, my mental fortitude. I don't know what it is, but, yeah, I guess that's a big compliment coming from Chrissie.

So I think, yeah, maybe also like cat with nine lives. I've heard that a few times, too. I do feel a bit more like that than a super power, to be honest. Maybe just a little lucky.

Q. Obviously the dynamic will be quite different if you would have played Madi tomorrow, but how do you feel like you'll use the crowd, because the crowd will be very much on your side? Does that feel like a point of pressure or how will you try to use that, I guess, to your advantage?

JESSICA PEGULA: I think I'll just try to do the same thing I've done all week. They've been very with me pretty much the whole week, maybe a little less today playing against an American.

But, yeah, I think it strikes a different dynamic playing against a non American. So I think I'll just do what I've been doing, just using their energy to know that they're out here supporting me and they want to see me win the title again, and they've been so supportive and with me through all these crazy matches all week.

So I will definitely just do my best to try and make them proud and give them everything I have left, what's left of it at least.

Q. I think I heard you say on Tennis Channel you noted the ages of the players when you were coming on the court. Did you feel like the wily veteran against the young rookie or that kind of dynamic today?

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, of course. I feel like that against a lot of girls nowadays, unfortunately. You always notice it, yeah, when they do like the little bio and they're like 19, 18. And then they say yours, and you're like, oh, maybe don't say mine anymore.

You just start noticing like, wow, they're so early on in their careers, and like time flies and you get all these different feelings.



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But I think, yeah, I definitely try to use my experience, and I think that is something that can't necessarily be taught. That's something that you have to go through, and I've definitely gone through a lot and gained so much experience and try to use it as a confidence boost, not so much as a negative thing.
So, yeah. That's it.

End of Interview

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Kelly A. McKee
Savannah Court Reporting, Inc.
Savannah, GA
kadmcr@yahoo.com