



WTA 500

Saturday, April 4, 2026

Yuliia Starodubtseva def. Madison Keys
6-1, 6-4
Semifinal Round

An Interview With Yuliia Starodubtseva

THE MODERATOR: Yuliia, congratulations. You're through to your first tour-level final. Just your thoughts on how you're feeling about that.

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Thoughts are great. I mean, definitely excited to play in the final. Charleston is a great tournament, and I feel like it's a strong 500 to be in the final of. So feeling a little proud of myself today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Congratulations on getting your first final. You seem very comfortable in this environment, comfortable out on the court like you've been here all along. Is this something that you have envisioned for a long time? Is that why you're so comfortable?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: You know, it's funny that you say that. It's like we've been talking about it for like a year that I thrive on big stages, and I might not perform on small stages sometimes, which I'm trying to fix. But hopefully I don't need to play so many small stages, you know.

But, yeah, I feel like I belong here, and I feel comfortable playing in a big crowd and feel the noise, I feel like kind of inspires me and gives me motivation to play.

Q. And you have another big match. Just talk about the challenge of playing Jesse Pegula.

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: It's funny, recently someone told me that I should maybe watch a bit more Jesse Pegula and try to play like, she plays great tennis. I like how she plays, and I think she's a great fighter, and this tournament kind of shows it as well. She got through a lot of three sets. I think she didn't play two sets once. Maybe.

So that's a lot. I think she achieves quite a lot in her career, and I feel like I just need to kind of focus and do what I've been doing this whole week and try to do my best tomorrow.

Q. Yuliia, I think you had deeper runs at Beijing and Madrid in the past. Has it felt similar at all to those runs or what has this week sort of felt like round to round as you've advanced?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Yeah. Definitely feels similar because the crowd is here. The tournament is big. I love this tournament, to be honest. It's my first time playing, but I hope to come back a lot of times here.

Prior to this match it felt similar. Today felt special, because I made it to the final, and emotions are kind of like overwhelming a bit, but trying to stay calm and just think about next match, not think too much about where I am, what I'm doing.

Media Transcripts Provided By:
Kelly A. McKee
Savannah Court Reporting, Inc.
Savannah, GA
kadmcr@yahoo.com



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Q. Congratulations, Yuliia.

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Thank you.

Q. It's not unusual at all when someone is playing a very top seed, in this case the top seed, to not serve it out when you serve for the match, but then to suddenly be able to break that person. Can you talk a little bit about the mental process you went through?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: I mean, I feel like in tennis it's a lot of nerves sometimes, and as I've said, I thrive on big stages, big moments.

I feel like it was one of them. Definitely had a lot of thoughts. You know, at 5-2, I mean, I feel like who wouldn't, you know. But was kind of happy I was able to cope with it and get through her serving game at 5-4. I feel like I did a great job breaking her all the first set, and I felt like I can do it again. So I just kind of stepped out there and I decided to go for it, which worked well. And, yeah, I feel like the key was to stay aggressive in that game.

Q. Did you learn anything from that?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: From what?

Q. From what you went through today.

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Yes. Yes. Don't do it again. Hold your serve. (Laughs).

Q. I know it's only been a few weeks, I think, with Eric, but do you feel like he's brought anything new or different to what you and Pearce had already been working on or what is he telling you about your tennis this week that maybe is not what you had worked on previously?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: I think he's really good what he does, and I think he's maybe similar mentality to me, which might have been the key to this week and the week before. But I think a big part like the weeks or year before Eric I've been working with Pearce, and I have a lot of tools that I worked on, like my serve, my backhand, my drop shots. You've seen a couple.

I feel like Eric is good at telling me what to do in the right moments, but working with Pearce and like working on all those tools prior to this moment kind of let me to put it together, like use was all my tools, and Eric has helped me to like put it together and just kind of guide me as to when to use it or how to use it. So I feel like together it worked very well the last couple weeks.

Q. Can I ask how much family and friends you have back home and what the situation is there given all that's happened over the last couple of years?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Yeah. I still have family back home. I haven't been home for four years. Really miss home. Haven't seen my dad for four years, my grandparents. It's a tough topic for me, but appreciate you asking.

Yeah, I don't know what to say to that. It's been hard. I keep thinking how to bring us all together, but maybe now it's going to become easier because I feel like a lot of it depends on the finals.

Q. Did you hear any or see any ODU support today out there?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Always. The guys out there, "go blue." Yeah. All my coach is texting me, my teammates. They're all proud, and my phone is blowing right now. I haven't even checked it today because I feel like I need to calm down a bit, because it's been a lot. It's been a long week, and Miami has been a lot as well.

But, yeah, ODU has been great support, and I feel like home kind of in the U.S., which is nice. I feel all the ODU support and maybe some people who are part of ODU and know about it. I always hear some things around.

End of Interview

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