



WTA 500

Sunday, April 5, 2026

Jessica Pegula def. Yuliia Starodubtseva
6-2, 6-2
Final Round

**An Interview
With Yuliia Starodubtseva**

THE MODERATOR: Yuliia, so much caught up this week just your thoughts on the week in Charleston as a whole.

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Good tournament. I mean, I'm proud of myself for, as I said in previous interviews, happy to maintain my level and happy with my level this week in particular, and maybe the week before in Miami.

I feel like I've grown. I brought up my floor, and I just hope to build from here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Congratulations on just a tremendous week. A lot of fun to watch you. I imagine this week is life changing for you in many ways, not just for your career on the court, but also financially. I wondered if you would just talk about what position it puts you in now.

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Honestly, there is a running joke about me that I perform best when there is a lot of money at stake. (Laughs). Like 1000s I play good, then I go to 125 and I don't play good.

But I haven't checked any of the prize money on purpose. Just I never do. I don't think about it when I play. At least this is not my biggest motivator, but obviously it's nice and definitely will help me in a way to feel free.

Like before this tournament I was considering to bring my physio on the road, which he's in Australia, which is expensive to bring him overseas for the European swing. Now I feel like there is an opportunity to do it, and maybe I'll use this opportunity and invest more in my career in the future as well.

I feel like I always did a good job with it. I never really saved up on my body or my coach. I always try to spend as much as I could with all the money that I had, but now I feel better about it.

Q. Yuliia, congratulations on an incredible week. Gutsy performance, especially down 0-5 to break.

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: I didn't want that zero. (Laughs).

Q. Incredible. I'm just wondering, what have you learned about yourself this week as a competitor and how do you think that will translate on the red clay?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: I think maybe not only this week, but like Miami week as well, I feel like I changed up a bit my play style and kind of like realized what type of player I actually am. And I think I'll try and build from there on.

I definitely played more aggressive tennis last two weeks, and I think it's in my nature, and maybe I haven't been letting myself do it in previous weeks, maybe tried to do more other stuff rather

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than just keeping it simple and be aggressive in certain moments. And I think this was like the biggest lesson in the last two weeks that I had.

Q. How good was Jesse? I mean, she played four three-set matches in a row coming in. Did you think you could potentially wear her down and it just didn't happen or was her skill just that good?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: I really hoped this was her best match this week, (laughs), because to be the only two-setter in the tournament is not nice. Yeah, I mean, I think she played good. I hope you do, too.

But, yeah, like, honestly, as I said before, she's one of the players to look up to and one of the players that like I've been told before to watch and like to learn from, and I agree with that.

I can still learn from Jesse, and I think she's a great player. And credits to her. She played great, and I feel like maybe I haven't played as good as I played the whole week.

And I was definitely nervous today. Like it's my first final. I felt like stimulated. Last maybe three days I couldn't sleep. It's been a lot around me for the first time, and my thoughts kind of didn't stop. It was like, you know, loud in my head last three days.

But, yeah, I think she's good for a reason, and all the credit to her. Great tournament. Twice in a row.

Q. Congratulations on your win, Yuliia.

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Thank you.

Q. This is not the first time you've mentioned all the thoughts in your head.

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: I did? See, too many.

Q. Is there anything that you do off court to help you to manage the thoughts and keep them at bay?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: I mean, to be honest, this was like maybe my second or third time where I have this like -- I call it stimulation, like, because you go find a tournament and you play somebody great -- like I played Madison Keys in the semis. I couldn't sleep the night before or fall asleep because all I think about is the match next day. And it is overwhelming, but when you can't fall asleep and you just keep thinking about like what's going to happen tomorrow, how are you going to play, what are you going to do, I haven't found a solution yet how to fix this. But I feel like the more I put myself on further stages in the tournaments, I feel like I'll learn how to cope with it as well.

Q. Congratulations on the week. Ordinarily on the calendar it feels like every week there's another big tournament, but you at least have a few weeks before Madrid. Are you relieved to have that kind of break, so to speak, between big tournaments and how will you spend that time before you head back to Spain?

YULIIA STARODUBTSEVA: Yeah, I was going to play a tournament next week in Madrid. There's a 125. I was meant to play a 125 in Portugal the following week, and after that I had Madrid 1000. So I was meant to play these next two weeks. But, no, I'm going to take it off. I feel like I deserve a little break, which only, I really -- you want to take some breaks, and like the more you obviously lose, the more weeks you need to play. So I find it like a reward in a way that I can take some weeks for myself. I'm also moving places. I have a lot to do, and going to take some days off tennis as well.

Q. I know you've talked about how during the match you were really thinking and nervous about it, but I want to ask the moment when you walked on the court, the atmosphere of the crowd playing in a final. What did you think of it and what were your emotions when you walked on the court before the match started?

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YULIYA STARODUBTSEVA: I mean, to be honest, as I walked on the court, it felt pretty similar to my previous rounds. I feel like I kind of calmed down by that time. But as I started playing, I still obviously had like thoughts in my head, this is the final. You know, it's kind of big.

I'm not sure if I did a good job, but I feel like I did a fair job of like putting it aside, because obviously like yesterday I won. It was a big win for me, and like realizing that I'm one of the last ones in the locker room is a big thing for me. Like I've never been at that stage in a tournament before. So, yeah, I feel like yesterday I was more nervous than today. But, yeah.

Q. I'm wondering what the reaction might have been back home in the Ukraine. Were people watching? Did you hear from anybody?

YULIYA STARODUBTSEVA: Actually, as I walked off after the ceremony, I realized I haven't said anything, and it's just because I'm purely nervous. I'm overwhelmed a bit. But I always wanted to thank Ukrainians for their support, and I want to say that my heart is there and was going to later write a post about it as well.

But, yeah, just thankful that some people still come. I saw Ukrainian flags around. It's really nice to see.

Q. To follow up on Madrid, you had a good result there last year, making the fourth round. What do you remember about that week and what about the conditions do you hope will continue to suit your game when you go back?

YULIYA STARODUBTSEVA: That was actually really my last week when I felt so stimulated for like last year. Honestly, I like Madrid. I like that tournament. I like the conditions. There's a little bit of altitude. And I feel like maybe my favorite surface is becoming like fast clay, and Madrid is that. And Roland-Garros is that. I did good there as well.

Here is like the clay is a bit faster. I feel like I did good here as well. So I'm kind of excited for that tournament, and I know I have to maybe defend a lot of points there, but I feel like I have no pressure here. Just going to try and do my best there.

End of Interview