

**April 3, 2019**

**J. PEGULA defeats A. Sevastova  
6-4, 6-2  
Second Round**

**An Interview With:**

**JESSICA PEGULA**

MODERATOR: Questions for Jessica.

**Q. Jessica, congratulations. What did you feel like sort of the key was for you today against Sevastova who's a really tricky opponent and offers a lot of different looks?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. Obviously she's a really smart, tricky, crafty. She can also hit the ball. So I knew that I was going to have to be patient, but at the same time still playing my game. So I think I just focused on if I was on the defense, to kind of play defense and get my way back on the offense as best I could, and when I had my chances, to be aggressive, because that's how I play.

**Q. That second set when you had 5-0 and all those match points and it started getting more complicated, what was going through your mind to get you back on track?**

JESSICA PEGULA: If I'm being completely honest, I started thinking about when I was up a set 4-1 against Tsurenko at Indian Wells, and I was like, okay, not again. This isn't happening again. But I was playing good games and getting up and giving myself obviously some comfort and some chances, and I think I just got a little passive, which happens, I think, to everybody.

But I think at the end there, I just decided to step up and go for it. I had a good return, a couple of good returns, and I hit the forehand passing shot. So I think I just tried to fire myself up a little bit to kind of close it out.

**Q. Obviously you don't live here anymore, but still have certain ties to the area.**



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**How special was it to get, numbers wise, the biggest win of your career here in Charleston?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. Super special because I'm from the area. I grew up kind of learning how to play tennis down here. So super special, and I also had one of my biggest results here when I was like 18 or 19 or something. So I had a good feeling this week regardless of practicing and all that stuff. I kind of went in knowing that I feel comfortable here, I feel good. So I was just kind of trying to ride that momentum.

**Q. Do you mind just telling, so you were in Hilton Head for how long and you came and trained here for what span?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. So I lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, so I'm originally from up north, and I was born in Buffalo. Yeah, I came down to Hilton Head and I trained at the Stearns Smith Academy with Billy Stearns and Stan Smith when I was pretty young, like 8 to 12, and they kind of developed me into like somewhat of a tennis player, like technique wise and everything. So I was here for a while, and then I was back in Florida.

And then I forgot how long ago it was, maybe four years ago, three years ago, I was here training with my last coach, Michael Joyce, and we were here on the center training a lot. So it was a great place to train. I loved it.

**Q. Were there any other top players training here?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. Samantha Crawford actually was another girl that was training here with me. So we all lived here and then my other friend Emily Harman who played on the tour for a little bit. So yeah. It was great. It was fun. Loved it.

**Q. And during that time did you actually live on Daniel Island or where were you?**

*Transcripts Provided By:*

**KellyMcKee, CCR, RPR, CRR**  
Savannah, GA  
[kadmcr@yahoo.com](mailto:kadmcr@yahoo.com)  
912-441-0821

JESSICA PEGULA: I lived in Mount Pleasant. It was a great area. I actually regret now that every time I come back, I'm like I wish I explored more because when you're training, I was always tired and had long days. So I kind of regret that I didn't get to explore it as much, but no, we drove up this time and I drove up with my fiancé, and we brought our dogs. So it kind of feels like home right now this week as well.

**Q. You're at your highest ranking of your career. You've just gotten your biggest victory. What do you think is clicking for you now that you're getting all of these results?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Definitely staying healthy, having that confidence that I feel strong out there. I feel fit. I feel like I'm moving really well. So that's definitely, I would say the number one thing. I think that kind of just gives an added confidence boost. And that I kind of grinded out last year a little bit coming back from surgery and was winning a lot of matches on the challenger tour, and I was like just a lot of matches, and I kind of did well in Quebec, and I kind of just kept riding the momentum. But I think it's a little extra confidence boost knowing that I'm healthy and that I feel really fit for sure.

**Q. And you're kind of on Team Jesse, I guess with Jesse Levine as your coach. How long has he been with you and what do you feel like he brings as a former player to your game?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. Jesse is great. He started right after my hip, coming back from my hip, so I think almost two years now. No, it was great. I mean, he kind of plays a little different than I did because he was kind of small and kind of grinded a lot. But he was smart. So I've learned a lot like how to add elements of that into my game, especially when I'm not playing well, how to like get back to like playing smart; and then on the days I'm feeling well, I can obviously feel like I'm playing loose and go for it.

But he's definitely helped me with that a little bit. And I think he's just a good energy. He's always really positive and he's pretty laid back. I'm never really super annoyed or like fighting with him or anything. But, no, he's just been really supportive, too, coming back from hip surgery and

giving me a lot of confidence that I belong at this level.

**Q. How big for you is it just to get that quick of a match, an hour and six or whatever it was? How does that kind of save your body and your legs going forward? Looks like you can make a run for this tournament. How much does the 1:06 match help you?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah, it helps a lot. My first round was a little long and a little taxing, so to come out and kind of play really well and go on court and get off pretty quickly is always a plus for your body for sure, especially on the clay. It's my first week on clay, I think like most girls. But you're a little extra sore maybe than you usually are, so it definitely helps for the next match.

**Q. I know you've had a lot of injury struggles and the body has pressed on you, but do you feel -- like you've got so much talent, do you feel like the sky is the limit for you?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Yeah. I mean it's weird because I just turned 25, and I don't feel like I'm 25 because every time -- I did well when I was pretty young. I was like 18, 19 and I was doing really well and I was about to break through and then I would get hurt, and then it kind of happened again, and then I got hurt and had another surgery. So to me, I feel like I'm still at that point of my career where I was like, I almost feel like I'm like 20, and I'm like, still have this talent. Doesn't feel like I'm washed up or anything.

But, no, yeah, I feel -- I've always had the skill and the talent, but it was like the health and the getting quicker and fitter every single time. And, like I said, that's definitely the part that's gotten way better, and it's given me so much confidence for sure.

**Q. Jessica, what has kept you going through all those health problems and surgeries?**

JESSICA PEGULA: I think you just realize how much you love the game, and for me it was I loved playing tennis. That's what I wanted to do. And it was definitely hard, especially my last surgery, because I had a really good summer.

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**KellyMcKee, CCR, RPR, CRR**  
Savannah, GA  
[kadmcr@yahoo.com](mailto:kadmcr@yahoo.com)  
912-441-0821

Like I had some really good results, and to go end the year like knowing I was probably going to have to get hip surgery really kind of bummed me out. But, you know, I don't know, I like to persevere and I like to work hard.

Seeing all the girls out there, too, watching other matches and seeing girls I was competing with breaking through and doing really well made me pretty hungry to get back out there. So I think it's pretty awesome that I was able to come back and storm back to a higher ranking, and I feel like I'm playing the best tennis I've played.

**Q. Does it ever surprise you when you get up that early or how quickly you got up 5-0 in the second set? Does it ever surprise you for a moment like, oh, now I'm up, how do I maintain this momentum so quickly? Does it shock you at all?**

JESSICA PEGULA: Not really. I think the way I play it happens a lot. Not like it happens a lot, but I've gotten a lot better at toughing out that first set and knowing that, like, okay, maybe it's going to swing my way. I think it happens a lot in women's tennis in general. Like you see kind of a momentum change in a set, and then you see the second set goes kind of quick.

I think I've gotten a lot better toughing out those moments, and then sometimes it just happens where you feel like you're riding like this wave almost and where you really don't know what's happening; you're just playing really well, and then maybe the girl checks out or she's not feeling it. It doesn't matter. But I think that's what I've gotten better at. So I don't know if it surprises me. I just -- I'm glad it happens. I'm like, okay, this is what I want to happen.

**Q. Earlier in the week we had Shelby Rogers come in, and she talked about how she took up piano and took college classes during her time with injury. I'm curious, did you do anything like that during your down time?**

JESSICA PEGULA: No. I did not. I mean, I got -- like with my parents and stuff I got involved in more like business type stuff. So that's been really fun. But, yeah, my mom was pushing me to go back to some college courses, and I was

like, I just can't. I can't get myself to do it. But, no, I didn't do anything that creative.

That's pretty cool. A lot of girls do that, and I don't know. Now I feel like I wasted like a year.

End of Interview

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**Kelly McKee, CCR, RPR, CRR**  
Savannah, GA  
[kadmcr@yahoo.com](mailto:kadmcr@yahoo.com)  
912-441-0821