

Mubadala Citi DC Open

Sunday, July 30, 2023

Washington D.C.

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Can you please share your thoughts ahead of the tournament here in D.C.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I haven't been back in a while. Super excited to play here in D.C. Won my first-ever title here in singles or doubles. I'm really happy to be back.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. A lot is made of this tournament being elevated to a 500 level. Wondering if having a 500 level this week on the East Coast matters to you, you're not having to go to the West Coast and then come back for Canada or anything like that. What difference does it mean having this spot be worth a little bit more for rankings and prize money?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it's way better having it on the East Coast. I'm biased because I live in Florida. I love being on the East Coast but especially going to Canada next, which is pretty much, it's another country but pretty much on the same coast.

I don't know. I haven't played it yet but I think it will make the transition a little bit easier coming from coast to coast. But also, I think I just love being in cities like D.C. better than the West Coast. I mean, I'm an East Coast girl.

And it being a 500 this week, I think it gives an opportunity for more players to kind of play at a higher level. And especially American players, if you look at the quallies, there are so many Americans playing. I think it just gives us another option to play.

Q. I just wondered how you're feeling heading into hard court season and this US Open swing.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I'm feeling great. I have a new team, I'm sure you guys know. I'm really happy with how the dynamic is going. I was a little bit nervous at first but I feel really good about everything now.

Q. What do you think has allowed Chris Eubanks' better tennis to come out? What sort of potential did

you see in him before he's had this summer?

COCO GAUFF: I have been saying he was going to be top 20 for a long time but he always claimed that I was young and it was, quote, unquote, "easy" for me and everything, that I came off that I had this talent. I was, like, Bro, I was young, whatever, but, you know, it's just tennis balls. Nothing changes.

So I was like, You have two weapons, a serve and a forehand. That's really all you need. Not all you need, but a lot you need for just to be top 50, you know.

There are so many guys that I would practice with some of the pro players and I was, like, I'm practicing with you, and I truly think you're a better player than some of them. Finally when it happened, he was, like, Yeah, I guess you're right. Blah, blah. I was like, Yeah, I know it was.

Really, it was just a belief for him. I think nothing in his game changed. He'll say it to you guys. Nothing in his game changed at all. Nothing. Literally nothing. Maybe the decisions he made changed, but his forehand didn't get better, his serve didn't get better. He literally just believed more in his game. And actually, those things get better but it's not like he had a huge training block and changed his swing or anything. Really just a belief change.

Q. I know you guys are both from Atlanta and clearly your families know each other. When did you first meet Chris? We can tell a little bit, but can you explain kind of why he's so popular on tour for WTA? Everybody seems to love that guy.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I first met him apparently when I first started tennis when I was 6. I don't remember that. I really remember more 12, 13 years old, then we played mixed doubles together when I was 14 at US Open. That's when I really got to know him. I really look at him as like an older brother, to be honest.

I come to him if I need advice and things, and, you know, I give advice even if he doesn't want it. I mean, I'm young. But I have some years, a little bit. I'm just kidding. Yeah, I look to him as an older brother.



On tour really his personality, he's a very friendly guy, he's funny. He speaks to everyone, really, everyone, down to the staff. He remembers people very well. And I think that he just has one of those personalities that you just gravitate towards. I think that's why he's just so popular amongst the players. I think people just know it's going to be a good conversation no matter the time. Even when he's in a bad mood, it's like a good mood for the average person.

Q. I just wanted to ask you what it was like in the stands at Wimbledon watching Chris. Are you there purely as a fan? Trying to pick things up? Trying to learn anything from watching those matches? Completely separately from that, I just wanted to ask about if there is anything in particular you do to prepare for the heat and humidity that you find in places like Washington and New York? Is being someone from Florida enough preparation as it is, or are there certain things you'll do differently before weeks in places like that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I was there really as a fan. But, you know, being a tennis player and professional at that point, you're watching a match, every match you watch you're trying to learn and pick up on things. I was doing that, as well.

I was very nervous. I don't know if I'll ever go back. No, seriously, I don't think I ever will. Five sets or not, for me, I went to the bathroom a lot. People were making fun of me on Twitter about how much I was eating. I was hungry and stressful. I don't know why people were mad I was eating Gummy Bears and stuff.

I was really trying to learn a lot from both Medvedev and Chris. Very different game styles. Yeah, I was trying to learn from both of them. You learn a lot more live than you do I think on TV. I guess I'll go back for that part.

But, yeah, I won't be at any tournaments, matches probably in the U.S. swing because it's too hot.

Moving into the humidity question, I'm from Florida so we are used to it. But I do think I try to hydrate more than I normally would, drink when I'm not thirsty. If you're thirsty, that means you're not drinking enough so I try not to be thirsty. I do try to drink more water, more Pedialyte, and maybe include salt a little bit more in my meals and things like that.

I do think I have an advantage just being from South Florida. It's way hotter in South Florida than here, to be honest. Today practicing it's hot, don't get me wrong, but it

felt a little bit easier than practicing at home.

THE MODERATOR: This is Xander from Sports Illustrated Kids.

Q. Your performance on and off the court have inspired many aspiring athletes. How do you stay grounded and maintain focus amidst media fame and fame off the court?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, that was a good question. I really think it comes from my family. They keep me grounded, they keep normal. Also, like the way I am in general, people know me, like everybody who meets me, I don't know, they always say they don't expect me to be this or that. I think it's just because, like, this is what I do; it's not who I am.

You know, you guys see me always on these interviews and stuff but I'm just really being myself. I don't treat it as a press conference. I'm having a conversation with you guys.

And when it comes to like just being grounded, I mean, really just the people who you surround yourself with. If the people you surround yourself with treat you like how you should and treat you on as equal, then you'll really believe that. You don't want to surround yourself with people who are yes-men and never tell you anything wrong, because you're not perfect, they're not perfect. I want people to call me out on my flaws. You as a person have to be able to accept criticism from other people as well.

That's the biggest thing in life, surrounding yourself with people that you trust, and trust their opinion I'm not saying they're going to be right all the time but you have to be able to hear them out.

Q. Welcome back to Washington. You won a doubles title here your first time a few years ago with Caty McNally and more recently you're playing doubles, it seems, pretty regularly with Jessie Pegula. Can you share with us how the partnership formed, what challenges there are, especially since both of you are ranked top 10 as singles player? Also, do you benefit in playing doubles, does that help your singles?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, the benefits, it does help both, to be honest. You know, especially if you're losing early in a tournament, it helps you get more reps in. Playing with Jess, she's someone you can learn from.

The challenge is definitely figuring out the schedule. We decided not to play doubles this week in D.C., to kind of

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

make sure we're both ready for singles and doubles at US Open. It's going to be a long one for both of us. I think that was the main thing, just making sure we're ready.

Dealing with the weather in D.C., our rankings, we're set. I think we try and focus more on scheduling, playing a little bit less, and playing the tournaments we really need to. And yeah, I think that's the main thing.

Q. You had a guest coach on the court with you the last couple of days. What do you hope another voice can bring to you, especially as you're about to go into a long tournament stretch?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it's something that I'm literally just starting. And, you know, I'm really open to learning from the game and learning from people and getting different perspectives, so I think that it will help me.

You know, my team I think have done a good job communicating amongst themselves before they bring anything to me. So I really feel we're all on one page and one accord.

Yeah, I think having someone with a little bit more experience will help me like for the pressure moments, the semifinals, finals, quarterfinals. Those moments that I still think I need to get better at.

Q. The interview the other day, retooling some things in your game and wanting to build. With team sports, rebuilding periods, they reset and restock the roster, if you're at all letting yourself have that mindset as you try to break down things and rebuild things in your own arsenal?

COCO GAUFF: Can you repeat the first half of the question.

Q. Do you feel like you're in a rebuilding period? If you let yourself sort of be more generous with yourself results-wise and how hard it is to dim down the competitive needing to win feeling while in that sort of mode.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I definitely do feel like I'm in a rebuilding period. I'm trying to hit the next gear of my game. I feel like I have the foundation in my game. Now it's building around that, it's building the house, I guess, essentially. I have the land and I need to build the house on top of it, make it as extravagant and big and pretty as possible.

Yeah, that's a good way to put it. I never thought about it like that.

Yeah, I am trying to be more positive of myself and accept that I'm learning, not a different way to play, but I'm learning to enhance the way I play. So I'm trying to make sure my first instincts are always the right decision, whether I make the ball or not.

I'm trying to be more gracious when it comes to misses and mistakes even if it's the right decision. It's something that doesn't come easy to me naturally because I am a bit of a perfectionist. So I'm trying to accept the flaws because it's impossible to be perfect.

That's what I've learned the most of watching a lot more matches, especially in person, that you do you see certain players, even Daniil or Carlos, they don't really get too upset with themselves in certain moments. Even if they miss a shot at 30-All, they're accepting it was the right decision, and eventually the tables are going to turn.

I think that's something I'm trying to learn and accept more.

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