

Mubadala Citi DC Open

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Washington D.C.

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/B. Bencic

6-1, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Coco, congrats on reaching the semifinal here in D.C. Can you walk us through your win tonight.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, I'm really happy with how I played today. Belinda is not an easy player to play. You know, I played all types of tennis. I was the aggressor in some moments. Some moments I was the defender. I'm happy with how I played.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Just a dominant 6-1, 6-2 win over a top-15 player in Belinda. I know you had that excellent win over Jess last month back in Birmingham. Is this possibly the best match you have played all year, in your opinion?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah. Yeah, this definitely is probably, yeah, one of the top matches that I have played. You know, I had some good ones in Roland Garros too. But, yeah, I think with the caliber of player and the way I played, this is definitely one of the top ones.

Yeah, I mean, this is the tennis that I have been trying to play. I don't know if I'm a hard critic on myself, but I feel like I could do better in a lot of moments today even though the scoreline seemed easier, but I don't think the scoreline reflected the level of the match today.

Q. You mentioned this is the type of tennis you have been trying to play. Do you feel like there was something you were able to just kind of lock in on today, or is this kind of the result of things you have building on?

COCO GAUFF: I think a little bit of both. From the first point of the match, I tried to tell myself that I'm going to be aggressive in the moments that I need to. Granted, it's Belinda, so I can't do that all the time, so I did win some points off the defense, but that's what I needed to do in the

moment.

I do think that the points I won off of the defense weren't necessarily me putting myself in that position. I think that from either the return and the serve she was already offending and I was just trying to do what I can. Whereas a lot of times I feel like when I'm defending, I put myself in that type of position where I'm hitting the ball short and then I rely on it. I think today I used it when I needed to, and I think I was aggressive when I needed to.

I think that's where she was a little bit frustrated because she couldn't play passive, because she knew I was going to be aggressive, but she also couldn't play ultra-aggressive because I was getting a lot of shots back. I think that's the type of tennis that I need to play.

Q. Why did you book a CPR class? Just something you wanted to do?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it was something I wanted to do, and also I had something similar happen, not to someone that I know, but it happened to -- I was practicing, and a guy unfortunately had, like, cardiac arrest, and he ended up didn't making it, yeah. And my dad had to do CPR on him.

So, yeah, and we couldn't find the AD. I had no clue how to work an AD, but my dad did, because, you know, he took the class. After that moment, this happened, like, three years ago, I just never did it. Then, you know, obviously everything that happened with my doubles partner's mom, Jess, yeah, her sister took that class before.

I was, like, okay, I need to do it. It took 90 minutes but I learned so much. I was hoping that I wouldn't have to do nuttin' today, but if it came to that point, you know, at least I learned that. I had no clue what an AD was or no clue what CPR was, literally nothing. At least I felt a little more prepped in that moment.

Also, I have little cousin kids. So easy for them to choke and stuff. I was, like, let me just learn that, because I don't want to be in that moment, like I should have took that



class. It took me 90 minutes. I had nothing else to do.

Q. I just want to ask, going back, a premature Wimbledon exit, coaching transition going back weeks ago, to have now only two matches, but the two matches you have had this week, the results are there. Is this reassuring, for lack of a better word? Do you feel you're kind of turning a corner and heading in the right direction?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I definitely do feel like I'm heading in the right direction. Wasn't even in the results. I think just the way I'm playing is a lot better, and I think a lot of people can see that.

I think if anybody watched my matches between Wimbledon or even at Roland Garros, like, I was winning at Roland Garros, I made the quarters, it was great, but I don't think it was the type of tennis that could sustain me to making consistently good results.

I think this type of tennis can help me make good results. I'm not expecting to win everything right off the bat off of a coaching change. I think if you're a player and you're expecting to just switch the coach that that's going to change your life, I think you're wrong.

A lot of it is you. Yeah, I just needed direction, and I think that they provided me that direction, so I am happy with the way I'm playing. But even if I lost today 2 and 1 and I played the way that I played today, I would still be satisfied, because that means my opponent had to play better than A-plus tennis to beat me.

Q. As somebody who has had so much success already, a lot of things came quickly for you, is it hard for you to be patient and think, okay, I'm in this for the long haul and maybe the results from changes I'm making might not come immediately, and I know, in my mind, eventually I'm doing the right thing? Is it hard at all for you that patience, I guess?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, a little bit. And I think it's because a lot of people expected, you know, a lot from me so early on, so you kind of alter your way of thinking, even though that's not what you thought.

A little bit, but I really told myself going into this transition that I wasn't going to pressure myself on winning right away. I think I can win, but, you know, it's going to -- I wanted to win in a particular type of way, and I felt like the matches in the past I wasn't winning I was really -- I mean, I am on the more athletic side, and I have a good serve and I think I was winning matches and I have a good mentality. I think I was winning matches, like, on that.

But, you know, I don't think it's enough to win a slam. So I needed to be more aggressive. I need to play the first-strike tennis, and I need to find a way to blend all those things and make it one. I think that's the way I did today.

Not saying it's going to make me win a Grand Slam, US Open, or even next year, but I do think this is the path I need to go. If I go through my career without winning one, I do think I can say at least I'm doing the steps now to kind of make that happen, if that makes sense.

Q. Kind of going off those last few questions, with obviously the coaching change and Brad Gilbert coming in and consulting you and then the aggressive game style, and also a new hairstyle, do you feel like it's a new era for you, coming in as you prepare for the US Open?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, the new hairstyle was definitely not a plan of the new era. Honestly, I wanted to try this and I got tired of braids all the time. I like to change up my hair. I have tried color in the past with the braids and everything, but I just needed something different.

Yeah, this is the new, I wouldn't even say look, because if you're Black, you know you change your hair all the time (smiling). I was, like, this is going to be it for US Open. But yeah, probably post-US Open I'm going to go back to the braids, because when I go to Europe, I need something that's easier to maintain. This is ease to maintain, I really like it, a lot of people love it, and it does feel weird not having anything on my back.

I don't know if I really like that yet or not, but yeah, I guess you could see this is new era, new coaching, new team, new everything.

But, you know, the hair is still going to be somewhat in a protective style. And the nails are still going to be there. I know a lot of people think I need to cut my nails to help me win a forehand better. I'm, like, I did try the short nails, and it did not make my forehand better. These are here to stay. So, yeah (laughter).

I need to move my feet. That's what I need to do.

Q. I wanted to ask about Clervie, who I spoke to her this week and she cited you as someone she can go to when she has questions about what it's like to be on tour, making that transition. What do you think about her game? When you do talk about making the jump from juniors, you don't have too much experience, but what advice do you give her?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I don't really give her so much on the tennis side. I think it's more like mentality. I told her, You don't want to rush into it.

She had the pull out of her doubles here. I think that was the right decision, because, you know, a 6-2, 6-3 win on tour is a lot different than even a three-set win on the junior tour. The level is higher.

I told her, You don't want to rush into it. She is someone who has had injuries in the past. I haven't had that problem, knock on wood, so I do tell her you don't want to push it too much, because there have been players young who just can't get through the injuries, and you don't want to end up having to take two years away from the game because you're trying to compete for an extra week or two weeks. I don't think at this stage in her career it's worth it.

The mentality, I always tell her, Let's hang out if we're in the same city. I know how it is when you're on tour. Nobody is really around your age and you're young. You don't have many people to just be friends with.

She is a very social person, a lot more than I am. Yeah, we went to dinner. Yeah, so I tried to just invite her out because I just know how that was and, you know, a couple other players did that for me, just invited me places and stuff.

A lot of times I would say no, because like I said, I wasn't that social. But she was down. She's always saying yes. She very much reminds me of my younger brother Cameron. I think they are both people who like to socialize with people. You know, if you're changing environments, it can be tough.

She's my girl. I have known her for a long time, and I just want to see her succeed. If she has questions, I'm always willing to ask her. Sometimes she will ask me, How do you get over losses?

I'm, like, I don't know. I'm trying to figure that out too. Just wake up. Every day is a new day. Yeah, I'm hoping she's going to do well, and hopefully she can have a good US Open.

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