

Mubadala Citi DC Open

Sunday, August 6, 2023

Washington D.C.

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/M. Sakkari

6-2, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Coco, congratulations on your tournament win here in D.C. How are you feeling? Walk us through the final.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I'm super happy with how I was able to manage today. I played a pretty good match. I got broken a couple of times. I was able to break back.

Obviously I don't have the best head-to-head against her, but at least I was able to make the percentage a little bit higher this time.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Congratulations on the win. This is a pretty big week for you. First title at this level. You have obviously been on the tour for going on five years now. Where would you kind of rank this achievement in terms of what you have accomplished so far on the tour? Do you feel this is kind of like even more of an arrival moment for your singles career?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think probably, like, right after, I would say, my first title -- I would say obviously the Grand Slam final was No. 1. Then I would say my first title, No. 2. I'll put this at No. 3. Even though this is a higher level, but, you know, that first one is special for me.

Yeah, so I would say this is, like, No. 3 win for me on tour.

Q. Speaking of that Grand Slam final and obviously this achievement right now, it's 500 level, you have beaten a lot of quality opponents, Sakkari, Bencic, Samsonova, do you feel like this win gives you even more confidence to go for your maiden Grand Slam title?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it definitely does. I think the caliber of players I have beat this week was probably the strongest out of all of the tournaments I've played.

I guess in my first title I did play Kiki Bertens who was top 10 at the time, and then Ostapenko. Yeah, I think the caliber of players that I've played, Bencic, who had a match point against Iga in Wimbledon, and then Samsonova, defending champion, and then obviously Maria who is top 10, as well, yeah, this is definitely one of those weeks where I gain a lot of confidence.

You know, every tournament win you get a lot of confidence, but I'm not going to lie. My win in Auckland, I played against lower-ranked players. That was more of a pressure win where I felt like I was No. 1 seed, I had to win.

This one I felt like I had to win too, but there is definitely a difference when you're playing higher-ranked players, so you know you're not as free in the moment. I feel like when you're playing lower-ranked players, no discredit to them, but you feel like your ranking is there for a reason. So when these moments come 30-All, you do feel like you're the one who is going to come out of it, whereas today you're not as sure, I guess, if that makes sense.

Q. You've been talking about wanting to show a little bit more personality, have a little bit more fun on court. You mentioned you weren't able to just to be as free because you had pressure on you in playing those higher-ranked players. How did you find that balance then?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, honestly today, I didn't feel like I had any moments where I could have put anything in. I mean, I was just so focused on just the match today.

I'm always focused on the match, but yeah, probably nerves probably kept me more concealed, I think. For a final, this was most, considering the scoreline, the most concealed I have been all week. I guess in my past matches I was a little bit more animated.

I just didn't feel like the moment. I'm not out here trying to fake things too. I just didn't feel like I had to celebrate certain points. A lot of the points we had were physical points off of unforced errors between one of us. So it



wasn't like I was hitting winners a lot today. She's a tough person to try to get winners off of.

I didn't really feel that need. Sometimes I did hit a winner, it was more like a let-go moment than a celebrate thing. Even match point, I thought I missed the ball. Yeah, I didn't hear the out call. So then I was, like, Okay, I won.

Q. I wonder if you have takeaways as it relates to your tennis at this tournament coming after the result at Wimbledon?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, the biggest takeaway I think that is pretty clear what everybody's going to play, how everybody's going to play me on the scouting report is pretty clear. I think that consistently this week I have beaten that scouting report, and I think that's why the players tend to get a little more frustrated.

Almost all week every player that I played has been looking at their box, because I truly think that the plan that they had I was able to kind of come combat that. So, yeah, I think today, you know, she clearly had a plan, and I think that I kind of just made that plan fizzle out a little bit.

So I think that that's the biggest thing that I have been trying to do was just trying to beat the scouting report.

Sorry, my brother is Face Timing me.

(On Face Time.) I'm at press right now, Bro. I've got to call you later. (Laughter.)

That's the first time he's called me in, like, two months. I'm not even kidding. I'm usually the one calling him.

Q. One thing I just wanted to ask was following up on what you were just talking about in terms of that scouting report and game plan, how would you describe that? What is it that you think every other player is coming into matches against you focused on?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, it's not a secret. Everybody is trying to play the forehand. Like, I'm not going to sit here and act like it's some secret.

Now my dad is calling. Oh, my God.

I'm not going to act like it's a secret. Anybody who's watching the matches can see that. And I think today I was winning a lot, honestly, you know, today I was telling myself to stay in those forehand rallies with her, because I felt like I was winning a lot of them and she was trying to change and get out of them.

I think that's what kept me in it longer, which I feel like in the past I probably would have been, like, I need to get out of these rallies. But now I feel like I'm really stable on that side.

Yes, I have to improve even more. You know, it's still room for a lot of improvement. But within the three-week span it's been, I guess, since my first-round loss to now, I feel like it's improved so much where I don't feel like it's a liability. It's becoming a weapon. So, yeah.

Q. Would you agree with that scouting report in the sense of you knew that that was what you needed to get better, and now you do feel more comfortable with that aspect of your game?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, I was losing, so, I mean, if I wanted to sit here and, you know, not get better, then I would deny it. But, you know, like, it doesn't take rocket science to see how people are playing me.

I mean, today I think she served at least 80% of the balls to my forehand. That's also one of her favorite serves regardless if the player has a better forehand or not. So that also played a factor into it.

But, yeah, and also most girls on tour favor the wide serve, I would say. I think it's just, like, that serve is just easiest to set up the plus-one. I needed to get better at that regardless, even if my forehand was my, like, best shot, I think that girls would still serve there.

Q. To that point, when you talk about the scouting reports and being well prepared, bouncing back since Wimbledon, is this reassuring to an extent, the changes you have made and how you have used the time between Wimbledon and now? How reassuring is it that maybe, I don't know if you've turned a corner is an appropriate term, but that you're on a good track here?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I would say I'm heading in the right direction. Both areas of my game, I think even the backhand can improve a lot more.

You know, a lot of people try to stay away from that side, but I do feel like there is moments I can improve in it, and the footwork especially in both sides. I would say I'm in the right check.

Would I say I'm completely satisfied with how I'm playing? I mean, yes, in a way, but also no. Because I feel like I can always get better. Even in the serve, I served a lot better this week. It got me out of some crazy moments, but I do

think that it can still improve.

I'm not going to sit here and act like this is, like, the best tennis I can play. I do think that I can get better. You know, I don't know, I'm really hard on myself, so even today in the match, I can sit here and I'll talk to my coaches and I can tell them -- there is points I won today, and I would look at my box. I'm, like, I shouldn't have won that point. I hit the ball too short. They're, like, It's part of the game.

I have to learn to take those wins also, but I do feel like I need to improve a lot. I have, but I think I can get a lot better.

Q. Congratulations. With your big win here three years ago in doubles and now this, does this tournament kind of hold a special place in your heart here in D.C.?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, definitely. The fans, like, really love me here. It means a lot to me really. Any American tournament I think is special, but I feel like even more here.

I have played Cincinnati and I have played other tournaments in the U.S., even last year in San Jose when this was in San Jose, I think that, you know, there is just something about D.C. People love me here. The diversity that the city offers I think also plays a role and factor in that.

It's just really cool to see a lot of people from different backgrounds really loving tennis and supporting women's tennis.

Q. Congratulations on the win. You're the youngest person and first teenager to win this tournament here in Washington.

COCO GAUFF: Oh, cool.

Q. We have known you in tennis seems like for so long, but at the same time you're still so young in the sport. Will you be able to take a moment tonight and just appreciate what that means and that kind of milestone on your way as you go on your career?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it's really cool, to be honest (smiling). I know I have said this in a press conference in the past, where people are pulling these stats out everywhere, like, youngest person to, like, hit an ace in 73-degree weather. That's how I feel about some of these stats.

But this one is a legit stat. I actually like hearing this one,

like, being the youngest to win this tournament is pretty cool.

Yeah, and I mean, I'm looking at the names on that wall, and one of my main motivations was really to be on that wall, so I'm really happy that it will remain here for as long as the tournament stays here, hopefully forever.

So, yeah, that is a cool factor, and being the youngest to do it is really cool. I mean, most of my life has been like that. But, you know, there are certain ones where I'm, like, Okay, that's really special, and I think this is one of those stats that's really special. Other ones, I'm, like, Okay, guys. We can't be the youngest in everything (smiling).

Q. After the match, you signed literally every autograph request. How important is it to you to be a great role model besides being a great tennis player?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, for me it's really important, and I think about, you know, I don't know how much the ticket prices cost or anything, but for people to pay money to see me and wait after the trophy ceremony in this heat, to ask for an autograph, I try to sign as many as I can.

A lot of them were kids. I remember being in that moment. Yeah, you know, a lot of people ask, they strip me from everything. Some people asked for my shoes, but I needed to walk. Some people asked for my bracelet.

I was, like, This was a gift from someone. I can't give you that.

They asked for my earrings and hair ties and everything. Usually I don't mind giving. I always try to. Sometimes I try to ration it out, because I am going to another tournament.

Yeah, I love doing it. Seeing their reactions afterwards is what makes me really happy, just seeing kids just really enjoying me. Because I remember being in that moment, and yeah, usually if I have a doubles match after, I'll try to get off sooner, but for the most part, I try to stay and sign as many people as I can. I love doing it.

Also, I don't know how much that small act of kindness can mean for someone. I know how much it meant to me, so I'm hoping that it means half of that for someone else.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports