

# Western & Southern Open

Tuesday, August 17, 2021

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

## Coco Gauff

### Press Conference



C. GAUFF/S. Hsieh

6-1, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Just talk us through the match. Obviously a bit of a long rain delay in the middle there, but just tell us what made the difference in the end for you to get it done in straight sets.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think for me, you know, dealing with the rain is never easy, but I came in making sure I had a good warmup before I went on the court. I tried to take the momentum I had at the start of the match into after the pause.

**Q. You're so young and you have so many fans. What's your support system like? If you would say, you know, this is my rock, you know? What keeps you sane on this road where you're young, you're talented, you have so many dreams?**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, definitely my family. For me they are everything. They are people I can always talk to, rely on, and know that their advice and all they do is in my best interest.

And also my best friend. She's someone I can talk to. Some things you don't want to talk to your parents about, so she's always there.

**Q. Talk about today's match a little bit. Obviously tricky with the rain delays, but just in terms of your level and being able to get a full match in, which was a tricky thing last week. How did you feel? How much confidence do you take out of this match going into the next one?**

COCO GAUFF: I definitely had a lot of confidence for today, especially that she's a tricky opponent. She's a tricky opponent and someone that has beaten top players in the past and still does it now.

You know, you kind of don't really know what to expect. I would say my dad's scouting report for me today was definitely the least detailed it's ever been, just because she

can bring anything on the court (smiling). And the way she plays is honestly pretty amazing to see.

But for me I think I did well just focusing on my side of the court. She hits a crazy shot, and trying to not let that get into my head, because she's talented and she will hit great shots.

**Q. A question about your parents and them coaching you throughout your career. I wonder, for you, does it ever get sort of tricky, like you have to find a balance maybe to create some space, being that what you're doing is so intense and you're probably spending all your time with your family which is also your coach? Is there time you need to break away and change the mindset at all?**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, definitely with my dad, we definitely in the past had to figure out when it's not to bring up tennis and when not. I think when anybody, pro tennis player or professional athlete, any athlete, whether they're in middle school or elementary school and their parents are their coach, it's definitely hard to find a balance between coach and parent, just because not all time at the dinner table you want to talk about what you can improve on in tennis.

I think that's what we had to find a balance of. I think we have been doing a good job on that. Also, with my mom, I remember like always telling her that I already have my dad as my coach, I don't want you to be involved in the tennis at all. She really listened to me when I said that. Just took a step back from sport, because she's an athlete as well, can give good advice, which I take sometimes, but then there are times, Mom, I don't want to talk about tennis.

I think they do a good job listening to what I ask of them, and I try my best to do what they ask of me.

**Q. A little bit hesitant to ask you about this next match before the tournament, but now that it is going to happen, can you just talk about obviously facing Naomi, and as we discussed a little bit before the tournament, you know, it's going to be a match that people are going to be talking about a little bit. How much of that buzz gets back to you, and how much**

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**does that impact how you see the match?**

COCO GAUFF: For me, I will say that in the past it did impact, I guess, how I played, especially during the US Open match. It definitely did impact, like the buzz.

I think I learned from that experience. That was definitely the first match for me where all the hype and everything, you know, affected me. Because it was different against Venus, because before the match, you know, no one expected for me to do well or anything. So there was no pressure.

US Open match, people expected a great match. It was a great for her, but the score was not so entertaining for other people. I will say it did affect me then, but I think, you know, I needed that experience to help me now, and now, when I go into these matches, I know, you know, turn off the phone or not focus on what other people say and ignore it.

You're out there on the court, and everything I do on the court is what I think is best at the moment, in the moment. Obviously I'm not going to make the best decisions when you look back at the match, but for me, I try my best to just focus on myself and focus on me.

**Q. Do you feel like you took lessons from that match into the next one that you guys had at the Australian Open? Obviously I'm guessing if we talk to Naomi about that match she'd probably say a little bit probably similarly to you maybe she didn't come out and play her best and maybe the hype got to her. Did you learn from that match?**

COCO GAUFF: I definitely did learn a lot from both matches, actually. For me, the second match I learned that I can perform well under the pressure, and that I do have a lot more fun on the court when I try not to focus on the expectations of other people and myself, whereas I didn't really find that I guess balance until that Australian Open match, whereas before it was hard for me to find that balance between the whole US Open and Australia, those months, which is trying to find the balance of, you know, trying to do what other people expect of me, but instead realizing I just have to focus on myself.

You know, it's okay to be selfish sometimes. For me I think I learned a lot from both of those experiences, and I definitely will take that into this match tomorrow and even my next matches for my whole career.

**Q. Cincinnati is a very important tournament before the US Open, but it's a big tournament with a small-town feeling, very friendly crowd. Does it cross**

**your mind when you're on the grounds, Oh, maybe I wish I had more time to go to the park and do other things?**

COCO GAUFF: I definitely do want to go to Kings Island, but I don't think I will have time this week to go. I told Caty that I wanted to go, but hopefully next year I will have time.

Yeah, I think now this tournament, it kind of made me realize how much I appreciate just being able to walk the streets and just go outside and not be in the hotel room, and it definitely makes you appreciate how lucky I am to, you know, have the ability to do what I do.

**Q. I remember when you faced Venus at Wimbledon on Court 2 in 2019, the amount of respect you showed her after that match really struck me. I have been thinking about Venus and Serena a little bit this year. I know a lot of people, they mean a lot of things to a lot of different people, but I just wanted to ask you, what they mean to you in the big picture.**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, for me, they mean a lot to me personally, just because, you know, I wouldn't play tennis if it wasn't for either of them.

Definitely a .1 percent chance I would have picked up a racquet if they doesn't exist. I think the reason that I believe I can go this far is definitely because of them. They broke so many boundaries, especially for African Americans in tennis, broke so many boundaries for women in tennis. Not even in tennis. In the world. Everyone in the world. Not just tennis, but every athlete and every person in general in the world.

You know, if you really like look at what they went through and all the things they must have been told and had to go through, it really makes me appreciate them, because I don't have to go through some of those experiences because of what they went through.

They definitely paved the way for me, and, for sure, they paved the way for other players as well. Their legacy is something that I think will be reached from generation, generations on and on and when I'm no longer here on the earth. I definitely think their impact will reach way further than my generation.

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