

# Western & Southern Open

Thursday, August 17, 2023

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

## Coco Gauff

### Press Conference



C. GAUFF/L. Noskova

6-4, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Coco, how does it feel to get what seemed like a pretty straightforward win after the delay?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, rain, at least I wasn't on the court when it happened. Yeah, Linda is not an easy player. I played her earlier this year. It was a 4 and 4 match. In the first set, a lot of breaks, but I was able to do well in the second.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. It was kind of a tale of two sets. The first set, it seemed like who's going to hold serve. Second set, it seemed to all click for you. What kind of adjustments did you make at the end of the first set going into the second set?**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, I broke her every time in the first. Holding serve is usually what I can do well. So I was just trying to hold serve. I really told myself just go as hard as I could. I thought my serve would click a little bit.

Honestly, a lot of it -- well, I did double fault some moments, but a lot of it was really the first ball. I was missing a lot of those in the rally. So I was trying to pay more attention to that and making sure I was winning those rally points.

**Q. These days there are players playing until 1:00, 2:00, 3:00 a.m. Last week with Rybakina. Tell us as a player what you think about that.**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, like, I get the whole business side of it. Like, last match I was the second night match and luckily it worked out fine for me. I started right at 8:30.

Most of the times, especially in the Grand Slams, it doesn't happen. I do agree, like, starting a match late, especially after 11:00, kind of sets you up for a rough tournament, to be honest. I don't really think it's fair all the time.

The situation last week in Montreal, even, like, when I played and I finished against Marketa at, like, 10:30, they were trying to put me at 1:00 the next day, which meant warming up at 11:15, which means waking up, leaving the hotel at 9:00 and waking up at 8:00. Finishing at 10:30, by the time you get to the hotel, that hotel was, like, a 40-minute drive away.

By the time you get back to the hotel and go to sleep, that night I went to bed at 1:30, and that was, like, me going really fast through press. That was when I only had three questions with Courtney.

That was, like, a smoother night. But, you know, it still was rough waking up the next day. It does affect you. That first set against Jess, my legs felt really flat.

Her match, she finished even later, 3:00 a.m., which is insane. She's right. It does set you up, like, a terrible week. I do think that some of the tournaments, especially the one-week tournaments where there is not that extra day, have to do better.

The rain that week was pretty -- it was 100% chance of rain at 6:00. We knew. I wasn't in Montreal. I was on the plane here to Cincy, and I knew they weren't playing that 6:00 match. But you still have to be there.

So I do think that there are adjustments that have to be made, especially in those one-week tournaments where there's no day off in between. Personally, I think they could have maybe moved that match to the second Stadium Court, because then it sets it up bad for that person and also, like, the fans in the final didn't see a quality match for the final, because unfortunately Liudmila had a tough week and it was amazing that she was even able to go out there and play.

Yeah, I think there has to be adjustments made. I think all the players agree. But also, there is a business side of it. But I think maybe the quality matches would attract more fans when the players are ready.

**Q. On that topic, from the outside, as a fan, fans think that the night session is the marquee slot, like, they**



**get mad when their favorite players get disrespected, don't get the night session. I know a lot of players actually don't like playing the night. It screws up your schedule for the week. Can you talk about how you, as a marquee player, kind of balance that high-profile ticket, but, oh, gosh, it might impact my tournament?**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, so I got lucky the first part of my career, because of the age, they weren't really allowed to schedule me the second night match. So all the matches, night matches that I played were always the first on, if you noticed that, obviously.

Now I'm older, so I can play the second night match. And like I say, last night I got really lucky. Then also, you know, they scheduled the next match, but the problem comes, like, later in the tournaments where, you know, you have one side of the draw playing the day sessions and one side playing the night sessions, and unfortunately that's how the draw, the night sessions, when they have to meet up in the semis or finals, and they have to turn around and play the day. That's always tricky.

Yeah, I do understand, like, the fans wanting that late-night match in that prime spot. There has been incredible matches in that moment. In the Grand Slams I think it's a little bit more manageable because there is a day between matches. But I do think, like, in the one-week tournaments, especially when the events aren't combined, it's a little bit more easier to spread the matches out because there are more courts. I do think there has to be a balance with it.

Unfortunately, I think Elena and Iga said the same, there is not much the players can do in that situation. We can fight. For me, when I had that night match against Marketa and that was because of the rain, I really fought for the not-before 1:30 time, or not before 2:00, that saved me the extra 30 minutes in the morning, which means a lot in sleeping terms.

Yeah, but, you know, it's tough, because, you know, the tournament is trying to work with TV and TV is working. There is a lot of things people don't realize, it's not as easy as just saying, Let's move all the matches up, because we still have to sell our sport.

Yeah, there definitely has to be some type of compromise. I know that the player council is working on it pretty hard, but there is not much they can do, to be honest.

**Q. There aren't many players who slide on hard courts. Can you tell us how that came into your game? Some people, like Tommy Paul, said he's trying to stop sliding. How has that developed in your game?**

COCO GAUFF: For me, I try not to do it so much when I'm on the run, like, from side to side, but sometimes those dropshots you kind of have to.

It's not really something I think about before I do it. It kind of just happens. I think there has been, like, three times where I'm, like, Okay, I'm going to slide, and a lot of times I hope it goes as smoothly, because hard court, sometimes you get to the stop and you stop there.

I think it's much better when you actually get to the ball, but I do think it is a little bit of an advantage when you're on those really wide stretches just to get one more ball back, but it's definitely a lot safer and much more easier to tackle when you're actually in stance.

I agree with Tommy that the less sliding on hard court, the better. Whereas clay, you use it a lot more offensively. Yeah, I agree with him on that.

**Q. Do you know how it came into your game?**

COCO GAUFF: No. I think just me wanting to get to the ball, and your brain figures out that this is the pathway I have to take to get to the ball. It wasn't anything that I learned. It wasn't anything that no one taught me. I never really spent time practicing the slide in practice. It's just something that happens (smiling).

**Q. Looking into your match tomorrow, Jasmine Paolini, you played her a few years ago. What do you remember from that match that might help you tomorrow?**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I remember I was up a little bit. I think I was up a break or 4-1. She came back. I think I was up in both sets and it was a long match. I think it was three sets.

Yeah, she's a tough opponent. You know, she's always going to fight and she always has opportunity to get back into the match.

Yeah, I know tomorrow I think I'm just going to have to take every opportunity I can get and expect one more ball to come back. I think that's what she does well. She's really scrappy but she can also play offensively well sometimes.

She's not an easy opponent, to be honest. Her ranking is not as high, but I think she's one of those players that, you know, really when you step on the court, you know you have to take care of everything, despite her -- I think she was a qualifier this tournament. That means nothing.

Yeah, I remember that match very well. Hopefully this time it's a little bit smoother, but I don't think so, so I will just try my best to win.

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