

Western & Southern Open

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Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/J. Paolini

6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Coco, well done today. Very solid performance. Also a day match. You've played later in the day. Talk us through how that felt, how the conditions were for you.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, felt fine today. I mean, it was a lot faster in the day obviously. I do like playing at night, but I also the last couple weeks have been playing day a lot, so...

Yeah, there's really no preference. In the U.S. I like playing night, but pretty much every else day is the preferred time.

But really happy with how I was able to play today. She's not an easy opponent. Last time I played her we had a long three-set match. So I'm happy to get it in in straight sets today.

THE MODERATOR: Who would like the first question?

Q. (Question about playing with pace.)

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, that court was a little bit faster than the stadium. To be honest, the first couple games, even though she's smaller, she still plays pretty aggressive.

I think sometimes people think her height, and automatically put her in that grinder mentality. She's really not a grinder, I would say.

Obviously she doesn't play, like, as big as someone like Sabalenka or somebody, but she tries to take the ball early and take time away. I think she has a really good forehand inside-in. She had a couple winners, unforced errors on that wing.

For the most part I think I was just trying to pick my targets.

I missed sometimes trying to go too big, but I was just trying to go for the bigger targets and expecting maybe closing the point out on another ball.

Q. You haven't dropped a set so far. How satisfied are you that you've been able to be efficient thus far?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think that's part of wanting to go deep in the tournaments, that physically it's probably better if you go in straight sets. But that doesn't always happen. Built a lot of endurance for that. I started on a break both sets, so I was happy with how I was able to bounce back.

I think probably coming from a lot of confidence in the returning game, I think that was something that I really needed to work on. It still can improve a lot, but it's been helping me a lot. And serve more comfortably.

Q. What has changed with your return?

COCO GAUFF: Just really picking the target, shortening the swing. Stance, trying out different ways. Some balls I took really early on her serve, sometimes I stayed back. Just picking the right moments and not trying to go full Kamikaze all the time.

Q. As much as there's been fine adjustments to your game since Wimbledon, through D.C., to here, doesn't seem like there's been a massive overhaul of everything...

COCO GAUFF: Yeah.

Q. The wins are coming more comfortably. How do you explain that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I was top 10 in the world, so it was not like I needed to whole reevaluate my whole game. Also the time from Wimbledon till now is not that much time to make any huge differences, to be honest.

I think now it's just mainly focusing on those minor adjustments, like the footwork, the decision making, things that I can really fix kind of right away.

Obviously, I think looking at myself now, I feel really confident, but I still see areas where I can improve a ton. I know it's going to take time.



But since now and Wimbledon, I'm really happy with how I was able to execute those adjustments and being okay with it not working out all the time, not going back, revert to habits. It's paying off in the results. So I think I'm doing the right thing.

Q. You obviously are one of the best movers in the game. What challenges do you have with your footwork?

COCO GAUFF: It's more of like offensively, being more set offensively. I think obviously on the defense, I really don't have much problem there. But I think it's more so on those middle balls that I needed to work on a lot.

I was doing really well on the defense, getting back neutral in the point. On the offensive end, I think those are the balls I needed to work on. I still need to work on them a lot, but it's improve a ton since then.

Yeah, I would say I was almost taking my athleticism for granted, knowing I could run for a long time, where I wasn't not being as offensive, where I would say there's other players that know they have to end the point a little bit sooner, so they really focus on that. I think that's the mentality I have to have.

Q. What are your thoughts of playing Iga tomorrow?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I don't have a good track record against her. I'm hoping that with the improvements that I made...

I feel like the French Open match that I played her, even though it was a straight-sets scoreline, I think I made some improvements against her since the last time I played her. I don't know. I'm just really going to go out there and continue to follow the plan that I've been doing in the last couple of my matches.

I do feel a lot more confident going into it tomorrow. But she's not an easy opponent to play, especially against me. I think I really just got to take it point by point and try to stay mentally engaged every ball.

Q. When you're more used to relying on your defense, it's difficult sometimes to know when to be offensive. Are you surprised with how well that transition has gone? Do you think about past years, and you know maybe there were missed opportunities going for a ball?

COCO GAUFF: I wouldn't say 'missed opportunities' because tennis is learning. I mean, I was happy with how

my improvement has started. I wouldn't consider it missed opportunities.

There's definitely been moments where I feel like, looking back, I maybe could have implemented that style of play. But I don't look at it as I wish I did this, I wish I did that.

I think it's just part of learning. Maybe those mistakes are the mistakes I needed to make to help me improve in the future.

But, yeah, when relying on the defense, it's always been a weapon. I think also the thing that I have to remember, I started tour so young, so I wasn't really strong enough to hit and close the point. When I was in juniors, I was a very aggressive player, to be honest. Like, everybody would know that playing in juniors. When I played in pro, the balls are coming a lot faster. Some things that are winners when I was in juniors is not winners in pros. So I really had to rely on that just to stay in these matches.

Now I feel like I really have the strength and mentality to execute those offensive shots. I think that's where the mindset comes in.

But there's matches when I was younger, I don't think I probably had the ability to do that. I was definitely strong for my age. Compared to now, I'm even stronger. Hopefully in a couple years, I'll be even stronger.

Q. In a flat sprint on the track, who on the tour could give you a run for your money, hundred meters?

COCO GAUFF: Hundred meters? I don't know. I'm really not that great at the hundred meters. Oh, that's a tough question.

I think Alycia Parks, she's pretty quick, has a good stride. Iga is pretty quick, too. I think those two would give me a run.

I would be curious to test it, to be honest. I do feel like I am the faster mover, to be honest. I'd be really interested. But I think the 400 is really my race. I did run track. I guess on tennis terms, I think the hundred would be good for me. Against any other athlete, I need the 400 to even have the chance.

Q. What's the key to running a good 400?

COCO GAUFF: I don't get tired (laughter).

I did the 800 when I ran track. I really only did it because I told the coach I couldn't come to any of the practices because I was focused on tennis.

He was, Okay, you'll run the 800, because nobody wanted to run the 800.

I would really crush people off of beating them in the 400. Everybody said I should run 400. I was like, I'm not going to take one of my teammates' spots, this is actually their life, and this is just something I'm doing for fun. I'll just stick to the 800.

When I did the four-by-four, I was the last leg, I was the leg that tried to make up all the time. I did pretty well.

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