

Western & Southern Open

Saturday, August 19, 2023

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/I. Swiatek

7-6, 3-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Well done. Your first win over Iga. Talk us through what the keys to that victory were today.

COCO GAUFF: Really just playing every point as physical as I can. I mean, I was just trying my best really on every point.

I think the serve was the biggest key today for me. A lot of first serves in. Trying to make her feel like she couldn't break me easily.

So, yeah, I think that was the main thing today.

THE MODERATOR: Who would like the first question?

Q. In the final two games, you missed a few first serves. You went after your second serve a lot. How were you feeling about your second serve, holding off pretty much the best returner in the game?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think I was telling myself to still go for my serve. I think in the past she's broken me, like, fairly easy pretty much every match. I knew maybe my typical safe serve wasn't going to work today. So I was just trying to be aggressive.

I missed a lot more probably than I'd like to, like in a normal scenario. But, like you said, she's one of the best returners. You kind of just have to take your chances.

The second serve, I hit some doubles, but I was really going for it. I think the second serve was kind of key. She hit some good returns, especially in the last game.

I think overall I managed my best with the second serve, considering, like you said, she's one of the best returners. So I was just trying to be aggressive but also put it in the court.

Q. How tough Iga has been for you, how much time have you spent in the preparation playing her the next

day, preparing for how you're going to beat her?

COCO GAUFF: I don't really think about it, like, often, to be honest until I play her. I've watched her play a lot. I see what works against some players and what doesn't.

On the day, it's only your game. People that have beaten her in the past, we don't have the same game. I didn't watch her match against Jess last week. I didn't watch that. I didn't watch really any matches. I watched a little bit of her first set against Vondrousova.

For me, it's sometimes tough to watch matches in the past because the conditions are so different from different places. Also Jess and I, we don't really have the same game. You can see what picks up and works, but at the end of the day you have to find the game plan and make it your own.

To be honest, I think my game plan didn't really change from French Open to now. It's just the execution was a lot better. That's what I needed to work on. I think strategy-wise, I know how to beat a lot of the players, but it's all about executing. I think that's just with anyone. I think most players know how to beat each other, but it's all about are you going to be able to do it in that moment.

Q. You mentioned that match in Paris. People might wake up and see that scoreline, kind of one-way traffic. You came out of that a lot more confident.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah.

Q. Progress was made. Can you talk about the journey from that to what you were able to do today, the stuff after Wimbledon, as well.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think that loss, even though, like, the scoreline was much like the others (smiling), it felt different playing-wise. I felt like I had a lot of opportunities in that match, just little points, taking care of the 30-All points. I think I returned a lot better this time, making her play the return. I think I missed a lot of returns on those 30-All, deuce points on her serve. It really came down to just those close moments.



Yeah, I had what happened in French Open, and I really learned from that. The past, I feel like I was just in the match and she was just blowing me off the court. That time she did still, but it was a little bit better. Maybe that loss helped me today.

Q. Beginning of the year you said one of your decisions was to be the less defensive player, much more offensive. Is that what you worked with with Brad? Maybe being a doubles player can help you.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I've been working a lot on offense. To be honest, it was really tough to do it a lot against her. I mean, at least for me, I felt like a lot of the balls that I was hitting deep and stuff, she was hitting it back deep. Maybe I felt like I was offensive, it didn't come back like a neutral ball. She would hit the ball really well.

I think for the most part in my other matches I do think I've been a lot more aggressive and a lot more offensive. Today I was a lot more aggressive and offensive, but I definitely had to rely a lot on movement.

I think that's just every player pretty much that when you play her, you know you have to run. I think Aryna said the same thing. When you play Iga, you know you have to run. Yeah, that's basically what you have to do.

I do think I did well on the short balls. Really every time she gave me an opportunity to come in or hit a shot, I really went for it. I missed a lot, and I missed some, but I also made a lot. I think that was the difference. I think she felt like she had to put a good ball back in the court every time.

Q. You talked earlier this week about transition from night session to day session. Does it help having a full stadium at 11 a.m. after playing a night session all week?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, 100%. I wasn't sure how many people would be up at 11 a.m. I was really kind of shocked because usually by the time the semis start, the tournament moves the matches back. I was like, Oh, we're still playing at 11.

I was really happy with the crowd. They definitely helped me a lot in those moments. Iga, her fans, they're standing behind her all the time. Every tournament, any country in the world, there's always a Polish fans, a couple fan groups in there.

Today I think the American crowd was louder. I think that's what I try to say in tennis, like I feel like the American crowd in the U.S. is great, but we don't travel, we don't

show up with our flags or anything. We don't really do any of that.

I think one of the things that I've always said amongst the players, amongst the Americans, I wish our crowd was louder when we're playing against a foreigner, especially when we're in the home country.

Today Cincinnati didn't disappoint, so I was happy with how they were behind me.

Q. You just said that you didn't change your strategy against Iga. Maybe Iga played a little bit different compared to years ago. She comes to the net more often than before. Do you think you have to adjust to her play style? Do you think coming towards the net does help you to beating Iga?

COCO GAUFF: I don't think so. I can't really recall winning many of the points she came to the net. Yeah, except that last one, I think maybe probably the only one that I won where she came to the net. Yeah, I didn't really make any adjustments with that.

I feel like most of the balls that she came to the net on was like a normal shot to come to the net to. It wasn't like she was coming to the net off a neutral ball or like an offensive ball. She was coming to the net when I hit the ball in the service box.

It wasn't really an adjustment. I just feel like that's something most players do.

I don't know. I don't really recall her coming in more. Yeah, it wasn't really part of the plan about her coming to the net, I guess. But, yeah, she definitely I think won most of those points where she came to the net. I think that was a good adjustment she made. But also I think that was just normal.

I feel like a lot of the time she came to the net, I didn't really have a play on the ball. It wasn't like I had a clean passing shot. That means she came to the net on the right ball.

Q. How good does it feel to get the first win over her, get that zero erased?

COCO GAUFF: It feels good. To be honest, I don't know if I was thinking too far ahead. No offense to Gael, but I did not want that record, like the Novak and Gael record. I didn't want that.

Yeah, I'm really trying to cut this down as much as possible. So hopefully I can face her again and get the numbers up (smiling). But it feels really good. It wasn't

necessarily like her as a player. I think it was just the moment playing players like her. I think it gives me confidence that I have the ability. I mean, she's a four-time Grand Slam champion, No. 1. It shows that I can be at that level or compete with that level at least.

I'm sure I'm going to play her many more times. I'm not going to maybe win every time, but I think this win shows me that I have the possibility to do it. I still think I'm not even close to the peak of my game. I think there's still a lot of kinks and things that I can improve, too.

Q. What will the rest of your day look like today and your preparation tomorrow morning for the final?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I'm going to see my physio for treatment. These matches, like, I didn't feel like it was close to three hours. I don't know, I feel like physically I'm just really in shape. Really, I feel like the only time I don't feel good is when I don't get enough sleep. It's not necessarily when I do so much work the next day. I think I train for moments like this.

Today, I mean, I don't know if it was true, but I saw her hitting her leg a little bit towards the end. Usually when people do that, it was cramping. I don't know if that's true. I'm not going to put any words in that.

I think at least that motion gave me confidence that the longer this match goes, the better that I have a chance of winning, so, yeah...

Q. You have opportunity to win the biggest title of your career. What is the challenge of coming down from this and getting back to work tomorrow against someone who is probably going to be a tough opponent?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, honestly it's not really coming down. Like, at the end of the match it was a high. I probably would have had the same reaction like any match, even if it wasn't Iga. Just a two-hour whatever match. It really, like, is not a high. I know there's more work to do.

I'm not the type of person like it's very easy for me to get back focused and put too much focus on one match or too much on one thing. Everybody close to me knows that. They usually say I should give myself more props.

Honestly today, looking at the match, there's a lot of things I can critique. My team told me I should just be proud of myself. I'm going to try to do that, just get ready for tomorrow like I did the rest of the week.

Q. You talked about your stamina the other day. Three hours wasn't a problem today. Is that something you've had always as an asset for you?

COCO GAUFF: Really, I think since I was a kid, I don't know, I've always done pretty well. When I was younger, my mom would say I used to run all day, not ever get tired.

When I was playing tennis when I was younger, my parents, really they never forced me to do anything. Okay, two hour private, then you're good, you can stop. I always used to want to play longer and longer. I would spend six, eight hours on the court truly because I loved being there.

Yeah, I'm usually the type of person they have to tell to stop. Usually when I do fitness on the track, cardio on the track, that's what helps me for these long moments. I do a lot of cardio. Yeah, I think that's just what helps me.

I think it's a little bit genetic and naturally, too, but also a lot of training and a lot of hours. Yeah, I know yesterday I was talking about track and field, but that's why I did well in the 800. I don't think I was necessarily faster than a lot of them. I didn't train for track. But I had the better heart and endurance. I got myself a good lead, then the mistakes happened.

Yeah, I think that just comes from a lot of hard work behind the scenes.

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