

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Thursday, 13 May 2021

Roma, Italia

Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/A. Sabalenka

7-5, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Where would you rate that result from today when you consider the form that Aryna has been in?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, definitely I guess a 10 out of 10. I think I played pretty well the whole match. She's not an easy opponent. I mean, sometimes you're always on defense, so sometimes you just have to scramble a little bit.

I think today I played smart and well.

Q. Very likely next up will be Ash Barty, who also has been the other in-form player on the tour. This will be a first-time meeting. Your thoughts going into a match potentially with Ash?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, it will be great to see, like, where my level is. I mean, she's the No. 1 player in the world. I have no pressure on me. If that ends up being my opponent, I'm just going to go out there and see what I can do and try my best.

Q. What do you think it is about the matchup between you and Sabalenka that has brought out a lot of some of your best tennis?

COCO GAUFF: I don't know really. I mean, our previous matchups we split sets both times. I don't know, to be honest. She brings the intensity on the court from the first point. I have to make sure that I manage that and bring even more intensity. I think you feel it the whole match.

I don't know really what brings out my best tennis. I think it's just we're both really good competitors. She's a nice girl. When you play her on court, she's tough as anything. Off the court she's super nice.

I think it's one of those matches that for me as a fan, I mean, if I were to be able to watch myself play, that would



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be a match that I would want to watch because you know we're going to bring everything we have from the beginning to the end.

Q. How does it feel to get three really good, high-quality results at a WTA 1000 with Roland Garros right around the corner, building on getting your clay legs?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, definitely feels great to get three wins against three tough opponents. Hopefully I can continue that momentum into Paris.

Q. Next month you'll be going back to Wimbledon. It's two years since you made your big breakthrough there. If you reflect on the two years since the summer of 2019, did you think at that stage you would be at the stage you are now? Would you be happy, think you made the progress you expected to make?

COCO GAUFF: Yes, I definitely think I would be happy where I'm at now. Obviously I want to keep going and keep going further. I'm not going to be satisfied until I reach my goal.

Especially during that time people were saying, It's a fluke, it will never happen again. I think I've proved all those people wrong. I'm going to continue to prove them wrong.

Q. I would like to know if you're planning to go to Parma since you have one sponsor on your sleeve that lives in Parma? Is that the reason why you're planning to play that tournament? Will you go whatever happens here?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, I'm planning to go to Parma. It was one of the reasons. I visited the Barilla factory there in 2019. It's one of the reasons why I chose Parma.

Also just because I figure it will be best to stay in Italy after Rome. After this tournament I can go straight there, not have to worry too much about the restrictions of the COVID and everything.

But I haven't really got a chance to see all of Parma. The one time I went was only for 10 hours. We only saw the Barilla factory. Hopefully if we have time I'll go around and

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do a second tour of the factory. That was pretty fun.

Q. What do you see when you watch Ash play in terms of game style, demeanor? How does that feed into what you expect?

COCO GAUFF: She's a very smart player. I don't really expect -- I mean, no mistakes are stupid, but no erratic errors, if that makes sense, from her. She's going to play tricky with the slice. She likes the clay.

I mean, honestly I haven't really thought about it too much just because I still have doubles later today. When the time comes, I'll look at the scouting report that my dad gives me, see what I can do tomorrow.

Q. At the Australian Open you were asked by the Japanese press about watching anime. You mentioned Haikyuu. You said watching it kind of changed your mind. Can you break that down a little bit?

COCO GAUFF: Honestly today if I'm being honest, I would reference it again in my match. I just finished watching Demon Slayer. The main character, Tanjiro, he has this breathing technique right before he fights. When I get nervous, I notice that slowing down my breathing helps me a lot.

Honestly today I could say at least five to 10 times I was in my head. You got to do the total concentration breathing that Tanjiro does. I probably wasn't doing it like him, but it definitely helped on those match points, before both match points. I was, Okay, I got to do the water breathing like him. It did. Shout out to Demon Slayer for helping me.

Q. A question about working with your dad. A couple players have moved away from their fathers coaching in the last couple weeks. How closely do you still work with him? Is it a complicated thing to be coached by your dad sometimes? Is it easier if you work with other people to make it less dominating?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it's definitely complicated at times. What we do, we do get second opinions from other people, whether it's USTA or Pat Mouratoglou. I think so far that helps a lot because, I mean, he's saying the right things, but sometimes I think it's good just to hear it from another voice. He's my dad and coach, I'm with him all the time. It's good I think we've been getting it from a different voice, a different explanation. I think it helps.

I think for at least now we've been working on just like laying back a little bit more. I think for at least me, in my match, I approached the matches -- I approach them

seriously, but I was approaching them too seriously. Now I really am trying to enjoy the pressure, enjoy the moment.

Today I definitely said to myself I'm really having fun out there, even though it was 6-5, 5-All in the first set, which is stressful. I think I have to make sure I enjoy those moments in the matches because later on in life I'm probably going to wish I could come back to this moment and experience it again. I'm going to enjoy these moments while they're happening.

Q. You're still very young. What do you think has changed the way you play? Two years ago you won your first WTA match. What have you improved the most and what do you still need to improve?

COCO GAUFF: I definitely feel I'm more confident on the court in my shots and my decisions. I think it just comes with experience, to be honest. When you make a bunch of mistakes, you know what to do, what not to do.

When you're still learning like me, sometimes you feel you're not confident in the decision you make. I think now I'm trying to be more confident in the decisions I make and accept the mistakes that I make, too.

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