

Coco Gauff

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to Rome. How does it feel to be here? Is there anything you're most looking forward to this week?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, the site, we have a brand-new site. I didn't know they were going to make all these improvements. It's great. I think everyone was a little bit worried how Rome was going to be with the draw expansion. It's already tight quarters, a lot of walking, but it's really nice to see how they expanded it. So I'm excited for that, and playing in front of the Italian fans, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. In terms of the expansion, can you give a little bit of behind-the-scenes detail in terms of what the expansion is, how different it feels with the 96-player draw?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, it's certainly crowded, but bigger gym, bigger players' area. I mean, fans... There's a little signing thing by the stairs to get here. That's just based off of what I've gotten. I got on site an hour ago, so that's based off the last hour. There's probably many more things I'm not hitting.

Yeah, they've done a good job so far, so I'm happy with that.

Q. Curious about obviously Madrid with the trophy ceremony, there being no speech. I'm sorry.

COCO GAUFF: No, it's okay (laughter).

Q. What are your reflections on that, and your posted speech on Twitter?

COCO GAUFF: Yea, obviously, I mean, the decision was made. I thought it was not the right decision. I think there was probably certain situations that happened before. I did express to the tournament and to the directors that whatever happened before in this situation shouldn't affect something like this.

I think maybe players want to criticize in their speech. I



don't know what was going to be said in the speech. At least my speech, I wasn't going to say anything. I didn't know about the whole situation before because I'm not on Twitter. You can kind of see us talking on the podium. That's when I found out.

I think for the most part, yeah, I don't think it was a great decision. I expressed that afterwards. They apologized.

But, yeah, for me, I feel like criticism... I'm always the type of person saying you need to speak out on things. I don't think the tournament should have made that decision considering the men also got a speech.

I do believe they were not thinking of it as men and women. I think it's just reflected like that. I think you have to take that kind of view into consideration.

Then I did go on Twitter to say the speech because, I mean, we made a final in a 1000, and it's not really for me, it's for the fans. We had a good crowd. I also told them, We had a good crowd for women's doubles and we didn't get to address that crowd for thank them for coming, and the sponsors.

I put on Twitter that, hey, I want people to know the people behind the scenes. People behind the scenes that I was interacting with were very nice. I wanted them to know we were very thankful for that.

But, yeah, I definitely think a different decision should have been made regarding that. This was the first time in my life this ever happened, and I'm sure a lot of people I've seen.

Q. Did they try to give you an explanation?

COCO GAUFF: I was told it was a situation that didn't involve me that happened. I'm not going to go into that situation. People probably know what it was.

But, yeah, that's what I was told. I said that situation for me was not deep enough to not have a trophy ceremony. I think that we worked hard to get to that final.

It's not about the speech. I have a lot of finals, so it's not about that. It's more about the principle behind it, so this can't happen again for future girls, take the opportunity away from them.

Q. On the concept of the victory speech, the runner-up speech, on some level I was surprised you guys cared so much to do the speech, especially as runners-up. Sometimes it looks like that team doesn't want to be there, give a speech. In terms of how you conceptualize the importance of that moment after a final...

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, for me, like, I'm going to say it wasn't about the speech, about what was said. I mean, obviously we lost, so it probably didn't mean as much as to Vika and Bea, who won. It wasn't so much about me wanting to speak and speak to the crowd.

I guess I do think the player should address the crowd, people who came and supported the event. But I think it was just more about the principle behind it, that in future cases, I don't know if someone, maybe me or somebody else criticizes the organization or tournament, maybe deeper than what was said, I don't know, maybe racism, homophobia, something like that. You can't just cut, no speech, no nothing. You have to take those criticisms.

You look at other sporting events, a lot of people call out their organizations. Nothing wrong with that. I think the professional thing to do is keep things as normal. In tennis, we are probably one of the few sports where we give a speech.

I don't care about giving the speech, but I'm just saying we should respect that type of thing and it shouldn't happen again in the future, especially when the other events got speeches as well. I think it's just about the principle behind that.

Q. On to tennis matters. How are you feeling, your game? How do you feel on these courts?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, I've been working really hard since the loss in Madrid. It was a tough loss for me. I think you could see that it just wasn't my day, my game, not how I like to appear on court. I've been working really hard since then.

Yeah, I'm feeling good. I'm practicing a lot better. With the coaching change, it's tough. I think I was dealing with making that adjustment. Especially during this part of the season, which is important to me, I felt a little bit of pressure.

Now I feel like having that match, I feel like I'm just ready to build myself back up into what I know I can be.

Q. Obviously you've had good results here in Rome.

Roland Garros as well. As we move to this part of the clay season, traditional clay court events, what is your mindset? You just said the pressure is maybe a little bit off now. Obviously in a few weeks the pressure is probably going to come back.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah.

I mean, my mindset... I think I was going into it with expectations, and I told myself, like, not to expect anything. I feel like a lot of my great results is when I didn't expect anything.

Now I feel like at this point I don't really expect anything like result-wise. I think I'm just going to try to enjoy it more, more than thinking in the future.

Yeah, I mean, at this point I feel like Rome will be easy for me to do that. I do think in Paris it will be a challenge for me to overcome. I think these are the type of moments that make you better. Hopefully I can learn from what happened in Madrid and apply it into this week and in Paris.

Q. On the coaching, I saw you hitting with Jarmere. Are you working with him?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I've been training with him while I'm, like, in between coaches. He's helping me out I would say more so in a hitting partner type of role. Obviously giving me advice here and there.

So, yeah, he's been great. Known him and his brother since I was, I don't know, 12 or under from Atlanta. Yeah, it was nice to bring him in, somebody that I was familiar with during this time.

I felt like it would be difficult to travel with someone so fast, especially at this point in the season. I didn't want to bring in someone new, not for the tennis part, but you spend a lot of time with your coaches. It's not like basketball. You stay in the same hotel, eat with them, everything. I didn't want to bring another personality with the pressure already going on. I wanted to bring someone I was familiar with.

Q. How do you find that aspect of being a professional tennis player and employer as well?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it's weird. I mean, I've definitely been interviewing people, I guess, coaches and stuff (smiling). Obviously I have my agent and my dad helping me in that process. Yeah, but it's definitely weird. I do think tennis is a unique sport in that aspect.

I feel like in basketball and other sports, I don't know how



that process goes, but I feel like they go through a lot more people before they even reach the players. I don't know how much the players have a say in that anyways, whereas in tennis you have pretty much 100% say in who you bring on.

It's definitely a different process than I'm used to. Now that I'm older, I feel like I'm more involved. When I switch coaches, a little bit like I did with Liam, I wasn't involved that much because I didn't want to be involved. But now I kind of have no choice.

It's a different process. I don't know if I like it or not. It's something you have to do. I just hope who the next person is, I get to keep them for a while because I don't like interviewing people. It's so awkward.

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