

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Monday, 13 May 2024

Roma, Italia

Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/P. Badosa

5-7, 6-4, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Coco, huge fight today against Paula. Your thoughts on your performance.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I'm really happy with how I was able to manage today. I think the match was a high level. She played really well. Yeah, I'm happy to get through.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Looking ahead to playing Qinwen, what do you remember of the 2018 Orange Bowl?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, that was the last time I played her. I don't remember much. I remember being down a break in the third set and coming back. I think I won 6-4 or something like that. Yeah, that's all I remember.

I mean, obviously we're both different players. We've both done a lot since then. It should be a fun matchup for the next round.

Q. You served very well towards the end, but maybe a little bit tough getting there. Over the last couple weeks it's been a struggle. With some distance from the last couple weeks, do you know what's causing it?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I've been working on it. I think today, even though the double-faults were there, I think it was still a better performance than it was last night.

I think for me the focus will be getting more first serves in. I think my first-serve percentage was low, but my win percentage was in the high 70s or something like that. I think once I can get that down...

I'm going big on the first serve, so I know I'm probably going to miss more. I think it's just finding the balance of going big but also knowing when to slow down the pace just to get the serve in.

Honestly, I mean, I bet on myself to continue to go big. I



INTERNAZIONALI
BNL D'ITALIA

BNP PARIBAS

know when I go big and my serve goes in, it's dangerous. Even though this tournament I want to win, I'm trying to think long-term. I don't want to lose the 120 serve by not going for it.

Q. Probably not there yet, but Sabalenka did go to a biomechanic expert to fix the motion. Was there any sense within the team there's something technical that could be changed?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, no, there's definitely technical changes I'm trying to make. It's obviously tough to do in-season and in-tournament.

I think, like I said, I feel like from the night before my last match to now, I feel like it's better. It's only been two days. I'm trying.

Q. You talk a lot about I guess wanting to play your best, be on the front foot. Do you find satisfaction in getting by, getting through when you're not playing your best, when things aren't going perfectly?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I definitely do. At first I would say I didn't. Now I'm looking not at I guess other people in the draw, in tournaments in general. For example, Aryna last week, I think almost every match of hers was three sets.

I think it's actually more positive and optimistic for me to get through these matches when you're not playing your best and still finding a way.

Yeah, I think I'm getting there. I can feel it. Like when I'm playing, today I was definitely a lot more aggressive. Yeah, there were some more errors, but I think that's the way I want to play in these matches. I know sooner or later I'm going to be making more.

I kind of played the same way from the first to the third set, but I think the difference was I was just making more of those short balls, putting away the ball more instead of making errors.

Q. You lead the tour in return games won. It's over 50%, which is kind of a crazy stat to break once every two games. Do you feel that at this point in the season how much and how frequently you are breaking? Does that maybe take a little pressure off if you are



... when all is said, we're done.®

kind of tinkering with the serve, that you know you can break?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I definitely feel it. For me, returns were something I was working on a lot because my return-made percentage honestly used to be really, really bad like a couple years ago. I'd be curious to look at those stats. I would be missing a lot of returns. It's something I worked on.

Now to see that number improve, I don't think about leading the tour in the match obviously, but there is a sense of confidence I have in that. That's why it makes me optimistic about other parts of my game. It's not the first time I've been in a tough spot stats-wise in an area.

I definitely think it gives me confidence to improve. I feel confidence in the way I work. I spent a lot of time just working on different parts of my game. I feel like it's in the right direction and I'm working hard. I think if you work hard, you'll get the results.

Q. What for you is key to making high percentage of returns? What are you working on specifically with your return?

COCO GAUFF: On the returns? I think for me, it was just realizing that not everything needs to be a return winner. Also I did shorten my swings on the returns. I think just reps, honestly. That helps a lot, too.

Yeah, I think just with that, honestly. It's not like a huge thing that I made. Also I kind of adjust where I stand sometimes. Sometimes I stand inside, sometimes I stand back. Depends on the server. Usually obviously bigger servers, you stand back.

Yeah, I think it came with just reps. I would spend a lot of time returning. One thing I learned from Serena, she would spend probably like an hour sometimes literally just hitting returns. Same with serves. Obviously with serves you can't do as much, just to save your shoulder. She would spend a lot of her practices on that part of her game.

I took inspo from that because that's the first part of the point. I think the average rally is like four or five balls. The first two balls are really important.

Q. When I was looking at that 2018 Orange Bowl draw, your semifinal, you beat Diane Parry 6-Love, 6-Love. I think you were 14 years old at that point.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah.

Q. What was that like as a junior to be on tour with

these people that you might have kind of handed these quite heavy losses to when you were not 15 yet?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, actually I remember that. I had lost to her in the tournament before in Mexico. I remember, like, going into that. I don't know, there was like juniors, there was a buzz around it. I think I was like, yeah, one of the top seeds. I don't remember what seed I was. She had just beat me. People were like, Oh, what's going to happen? I don't know what happened, but I won that match.

Yeah, honestly it's cool to see your peers move up. It's also kind of existential in a way that competition is literally going to be the same for probably the next 10 years. It's going to be the same crew of people, God willing everybody does well.

It's very weird. Obviously there's going to be some newcomers coming on and new people. It is weird if you look at, I don't know, I just see old photos. I saw that photo of Rublev, Ostapenko and Medvedev in New York. I'm like, I don't know. It kind of put in perspective these people I'm about to be around for the rest of my life, playing each other.

I really just enjoy being on tour because I know everything can be so tense and competitive. At the end of the day we're going to play each other 10, 15 times. I don't know. I think at this point you don't have to be the best of friends, but everybody should be friendly, which I think that's the difference also between the WTA before I came and the WTA now. I think everybody is just like more friendlier in general.

Q. An original question. When was the last time you changed your racquet or your setup and how different does it feel when you do change?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I switched technically from the Speed to the Boom. I didn't really change much in my racquet, to be honest and transparent. I don't really flirt too much. Especially after winning US Open, I felt like there's nothing I needed to change.

Tension is something I flirt with. I think obviously every player does. Right now I'm really happy with where my racquet is at. Maybe off-season, every couple off-seasons, I will test weight. I'll line up, put all the racquets the same, and I'll pick which one I like. I did that two years ago. I ended up picking the racquet I was already using. I didn't know. That shows I'm kind of happy where I'm at. I'll probably do it again maybe in a year or two. If I end up picking the same racquet, then there's no need to change.



Q. The specs haven't changed since you were a kid?

COCO GAUFF: Oh, no, yeah, the specs have definitely changed since juniors to now. I thought you meant like in the last two years. Oh, definitely I've gone up in weight, yeah (laughter). I've gotten stronger. Definitely gone up in weight, changed racquets essentially. Yeah, I definitely have changed since juniors.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports