

Internazionali BNL d'Italia

Tuesday, 6 May 2025

Roma, Italia

Coco Gauff

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, Coco. Obviously a busy week in Madrid. How are you feeling ahead of the tournament?

COCO GAUFF: Super happy to be back in Rome. Excited to hopefully capitalize and do one better than I did in Madrid.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Coco, it's been two days. Given how kind of obviously intense this period is, with these back-to-back tournaments, how do you keep your head and do things also off the court to make sure when you get on court, you're in a good place mentally?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think just trying to do things like movies. Both my parents were in Madrid, so that helped. Yeah, I think for me it's just connecting with people.

I do a lot better in Europe than most Americans. I don't find it like such a drag as some of us think (smiling). Yeah, I mean, honestly I prefer, it's a more fun way when you're playing than when you're losing and waiting around. I feel like that's where I get most motivation, is to stay deep in these tournaments so I'm not, like, stuck waiting around doing nothing.

Q. When you talk about Madrid, starting off a little rocky, then kind of finding your groove and building, what happened there? What did you learn from that in terms of as you're going through these events? Did something click that you've been working on? Sort of some days are better than other days?

COCO GAUFF: I think it was... I don't know. Obviously I was struggling a little bit. I think that tough match kind of built my confidence. She was playing well. Especially in my first round, her ranking doesn't show that. She can play some top-five tennis. That's what I feel like she played.

After that, yeah, it was pretty much smooth sailing till the final. I learned one match doesn't define your tournament. Obviously, you win a match like that, you're like it's going to be a rough tournament.



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I think taking each match with a new perspective, new day, new mindset.

Q. Did anything click necessarily?

COCO GAUFF: I don't know. I wouldn't say something clicked. I mean, I don't know. I really don't know. I feel like I was playing maybe less mistakes, things like that. It's not like I drastically improved in one day.

Q. I saw you were hanging out with Tyra Grant yesterday at the draw. How well do you know her? What do you think of her potential? What do you think about her nationality switch?

COCO GAUFF: I don't know her super well. I met her a while ago. I was doing Fed Cup, and they brought a couple juniors. Ever since then, we've just talked a little bit when we see each other at tournaments. On a personal level, I don't know her well.

And her potential, I mean, she obviously has a lot of potential. I've actually never watched her play. I mean, based off the results, what I see her doing in juniors, obviously she has a lot of potential.

I just never sat there and watched a match. I will now that she's playing on the same level. I'll try to get ready. Probably going to play each other sooner than later.

Nationality switch? When I first met her, I knew she was Italian. She was very proud to be Italian. She speaks Italian. That was a long time ago. I'm not surprised or anything.

I asked her about it and she felt culturally she resonated more with the Italian culture because she lives and trains here.

To me, I think it made sense. I think it's cool to have the option who you want to represent. Yeah, if I had a cool option like Italy, I think they're a great place to represent, I might do the same. I love being American, too.

I think when I talk to her, she's both. When I see her interacting with Italians here, I'm like, Okay, yeah, I see why she made the change.



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Q. You mentioned watching movies. I think you've seen 'Sinners' twice already. What do you make of the film?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I really liked it. They asked me about it in the finals. Did you see it?

Q. Yes.

COCO GAUFF: Did you like it?

Q. I need to see it again.

COCO GAUFF: You don't like Michael B. Jordan? Okay. I mean, I get it (laughter).

What I think of 'Sinners'? I thought it was great. I just like the symbolism in it. The music, I've been literally listening to the Sinner soundtrack pre match. Obviously it is not a soundtrack you should listen before you go on court. I just love it.

I probably will see it again. I put it on my top four movies on Letterboxd. I don't take this lightly (smiling).

Q. You had so many years of being the youngest by far on tour. How does it feel now that you've got Mirra in the top 10, Diana Shnaider. Do you see your generation coming possibly?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, from a competition perspective, it doesn't matter to me. When I was younger, I never cared about my age or anything like that.

From a personal, yeah, it's great to have people around my age. I've always, like, said it was always hard for me to make friends on tour when I first came because I was just way younger than everyone. I was 15. There is not other 15- or 16-year-olds playing these tournaments week in, week out. The closest was like a 19-, 20-year-olds, maybe outside of Iga.

But now having more friends around, it does make a difference. I feel different on-site just being able to have conversations, relate-ability. Not that the older players weren't nice to me, they were. It's just different. They're getting married, planning their lives out. I'm just still trying to figure it out.

It's good to figure it out with other people.

Q. I saw your runner-up speech in Madrid, which was quite inspirational. Can you explain how important is your faith and your belief in Jesus.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it's super important for me. I've said it in every speech. I know there's like a whole discourse about it online, but I've done it every speech that I've been on tour.

I'm not out here trying to force anybody to believe in anything. I share my beliefs for people who also believe in it, as well.

Yeah, I think for me you come to a point where you start criticizing people for saying anything, whether it's religion, or pride in their sexuality or anything like that, that's a bit of censorship.

I think we all should be able to do what we want to do as long as it's not harming other people. For me it's important to share it and let other people know it helps me, it could also help someone else in their life.

Q. It's not the same as your church, but could you see yourself going to St. Peter's Square this week during the Papal conclave? What do you like about Europe that other Americans might not appreciate?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I'm not Catholic. I would go because I feel like it's an historic thing. We talked about it. I learned a lot 'cause I don't know anything about the Catholic religion. With the whole smoke thing, I thought that was cool. I would like to go and see it and be around it since we're here.

What was your second question? Oh, the European.

I think I just grew up spending a lot of time here because of Patrick Mouratoglou. I went to his academy and I spent summers in Nice. I enjoy the European culture, to be honest. I love being American, things like that, but I like to experience new things, try new things and conform to other cultures. I think that's the difference.

I generally enjoy traveling. I look forward to come to Europe. Honestly, I just think the clothes and stuff are better here, too, so I spend a lot of time in the stores.

Q. You recently made the change instead of launching this new enterprise on your own. Has that changed anything? Is there anything coming on that front in terms of what you'll be doing?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I would say not in the near future. I mean, as far as like tennis-wise and life-wise, no, it won't change anything. But as far as, like, in the future, yeah, it's something that I wanted to build just for post career. I've always been passionate about other things since before I

was pro. I have the opportunity to pursue those passions.

It's going to take time and stuff because of the fact that tennis is my main priority. I have a lot I want to do in this sport.

But I think that just starting the foundation instead of when I'm retired, having to play catch-up, I think it's like why not. I can do both things and be passionate about it.

Q. I have ask to something about Belinda Bencic. I think you played her three times this year. You might be in the same half here. What can you say about her? What makes it so difficult to play against her?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, she's a tough opponent. I think she's just a really good ball-striker. She takes the ball insanely early. Yeah, what can I say? Off the court she's super nice. Actually I think I first hit with her when I was 14 or 13 at Miami Open. I don't know if she even remembers.

Yeah, everything... Being a mom, how she's kind of right where she left off is pretty inspiring. I think when I see her interact with her family, she truly strikes me as someone that's really happy with her life, which I am, too. I think long-term, that's a place I would like to strive to be. She's a very genuine person, as well.

Yeah, if we play again, it's going to be another tough match. It's never easy against Belinda. She forces me to be a better player, which I can appreciate.

Q. Over the years I have seen how tough it is for players when they face players who are injured. Sometimes it gets in your head. What has your experience been like with that? Was that ever difficult for you? What is the challenge of that, in general?

COCO GAUFF: I think the challenge of it is when you know they're injured, you just want to keep the ball in the court, keep them playing. Also when the person is injured, they're probably going to go for more, try to end the points early. Obviously if you're pushing the ball in, they're slapping, it's not a good look, a good combination for you.

Yeah, it's always difficult. Sometimes I feel like people play better when they're injured because of the fact, whatever, nothing to lose. You go out there, whatever happens happens. It's all awkward. You never know whether to celebrate or not.

When I was younger, I used to struggle with it a lot. I'm still nice, but I was probably too nice then. I would almost give away the match. Now I try to ignore it and pretend they're still healthy and everything, play like I would normally. If

not, I would probably just put the ball in the court.

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