

BNP Paribas Open

Friday, March 11, 2022

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/C. Liu

6-1, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Tell us about your match tonight.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah. I thought I played well for the most part. Obviously towards the end, or actually the beginning of the second set she started to play better and really came into her form and I was just trying my best to kind of stay steady and, yeah, I'm glad I was able to pull it out today.

Q. Speaking on the match tonight, in that second set, very long second set, Claire really elevated towards the end there. What were you telling yourself to try and make the adjustments as her level started to go up?

COCO GAUFF: Just to stay in there in every point. I mean, I had a lot of break points that I didn't convert and a match point too on serve. So I was just trying to tell myself to stay in there and kind of hang in. I knew that she was playing well. You can kind of feel when a player's playing well and sometimes there's not much you can do about it, but today I was just trying to do my best to get the ball deep in the court.

Q. I got to ask you, you play Sunday which is your birthday. What's your experience playing on your birthday in the past?

COCO GAUFF: This is my first time playing on my birthday, actually, just because this is my first Indian Wells in March. So I don't know. Obviously I hope I win on my birthday. That would suck if I lose. But if I do, I know I'm going to have a good day regardless, regardless of result, so, yeah.

Q. Are you going to do anything different? I imagine there will be some sort of celebration but is it just kind of another day because you're playing?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah. I feel like it will be the same, another day, since I'm playing. I mean, my parents might give me something in the morning or something. But,

yeah, just another day, to be honest.

Q. You last played Halep 2019 at Wimbledon. How do you think you've changed or grown in those years?

COCO GAUFF: A lot has changed, obviously, ranking, I think I'm ranked higher than her, so that's a difference, even though I don't think ranking really matters, to be honest. Yeah, I think it's just a number.

But, yeah, it will be an interesting match. I definitely feel like I have a lot more experience now. And, yeah, I think it will be a good match and hopefully I can pull it out.

Q. Speaking on experience you said that you were focusing in that second set of staying calm and sticking with it and grinding it out. Do you feel that experience of all these matches in those moments where you don't panic, you know, maybe back when you had played Halep in those years, when a player starts to elevate you feel a little bit more anxious in that moment, but do you feel a lot more calm in those moments?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah. I definitely do feel more calm. Today I was really trying to take my time going to my towel, fighting my instincts to not rush. That was definitely, a lot of times I just wanted to rush up to the line, but I tried to tell myself to take my time. So I think that's from learning from the past and hopefully I can keep making those right decisions in those moments.

Q. You were wearing the blue and yellow today. Did you want to say a few words about what went into that decision?

COCO GAUFF: For me, I just wanted to support peace for all. I think that the situation is tough and I hope that the conflict is resolved as quick as possible. I hate to see loss of life. And, yeah, for me I was just kind of, my, you know, my way of doing the Tennis United, Tennis Plays For Peace kind of thing that WTA and ATP and the slams are kind of pushing, and, yeah.

Q. On playing Halep, what's the challenge for you



playing her?

COCO GAUFF: Obviously she's a great player, two-time Grand Slam champion. She's a great mover and I think that, well, I know that there will be really long rallies and I kind have to expect always one more ball to come back.

And she does a really good job of changing direction and hitting those angles, so I'll have to run a little bit too. Yeah, I think for me I just, I think the mental challenge will be the most important. When I play against her expect her to hit good shots and try not to be too stressed about it and just playing at one point at a time.

Q. Do you remember what your emotions were like going into that match at Wimbledon? Obviously it was an epic tournament for you. Was the expectation like I'm going to win, what was going through your mind ahead of that match?

COCO GAUFF: I definitely wasn't expecting to win any match there, so, yeah, I think I was just kind of swinging. And, yeah, she played well and, like, for some reason I always have this feeling, like I think a player's going to win a tournament and like they do and I'm like, I mean, I know Serena was also playing, so I knew that Halep was going to get to the finals after playing her. I was like, she's playing really well.

And not that I had much experience playing against top players any ways, but like you can kind of tell that she was playing well and, yeah, I knew she was going to be in the finals for sure. Yeah, she ended up winning. So, yeah, I feel that's happened to me a couple of times, I lost to the player who won the tournament. I definitely feel like when you lose you kind of just know like, yeah, they're going to win.

Q. Are you someone who roots for the player who beat you to win the title because it puts your loss in a different context or are you someone who is like, I really hope you lose your next match?

COCO GAUFF: I would say, I mean obviously if you're going to lose you're going to want to lose to the winner, so I definitely root for them unless they're playing somebody that I know or am friend's with.

But, yeah I wouldn't say necessarily I root, but it's nice, it sucks to lose anyways, but maybe it sucks a little less to lose to the person who won the tournament.

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