

BNP Paribas Open

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/R. Peterson

6-3, 1-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: A big fight from you today. What are your thoughts on your performance?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, mentally I hung in there when I needed to. Playing-wise obviously there is a lot of things I can improve on for the next match, but considering the circumstances, I'm happy to be done with today (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Happy belated, by the way.

COCO GAUFF: Thank you.

Q. What made today so tricky?

COCO GAUFF: I think definitely the conditions. My first round I played night, then the second round I played day where the ball was super jumpy. Yesterday doubles day was jumpy. Then today, I was expecting day, jumpy, but obviously when I woke up, I was like, okay, it's really cloudy, thought it would clear up by time I play, but no. It was super slow today.

Really, I think I was trying to hit out through the ball. I think that's where I messed up in the second. I wasn't getting any def on the ball, so she was just running me around the court.

Then I really started hitting the ball I guess harder than you would think for it to land deep, and I think that's what made the difference in the match. Really just mentally hanging in that fight, too.

Q. Jess said when she's back at this tournament she'll swap out her racquets a lot for different strings throughout the match. Have you been doing that as well?

COCO GAUFF: No, I know she does that a lot. No, I don't

really swap. Really, only in day and night I'll change. Even today I don't think the tension would have made that much of a difference. Maybe I could have gone a little bit looser now looking back because it was cloudier today.

But, yeah, I'm not really a player that focuses too much on the string and everything. A, I think because I don't have enough experience on that regarding if it's good for me or not. B, like Jess is so level-headed, so for me it would just be another thing to think about. I think it's almost good I don't add that variable to it.

Q. Does a tight match like that against someone who is I think a qualifier, does that set you up mentally as you go into the business end of the tournament with really high-ranked players?

COCO GAUFF: I don't really think about qualifier, lower-ranked or any of that. Because you look at the tournament, especially on the men's draw, there was a lot of upsets in the first couple rounds. It's really just about getting through the matches.

Rebecca, I played her a while ago, and I've been keeping track of her game since that time I played her, and she's a really good player. She just finaled in Merida, I believe.

I feel like ranking is almost, yes, it matters, but especially with the way the WTA is, I think it's all about who is in form right now. I think that coming off a final, she's pretty in form. I knew it was going to be a tough match for me in these conditions. I think she likes the slower conditions so she can run around and hit her forehands, and that's what she was doing today.

But really, I think in these type of matches, you just kind of have to get through and fight. It gives me a lot of confidence, I haven't won a third set in a while, so it gives me confidence on that aspect of it.

Q. What is it like when you're down 4-2 and then you turn it around? How is that mentally? What goes on?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I knew that I was close in the returning games. I think before that, I had opportunity to



break. I was up 40-15. So I knew that if I kept putting pressure, I would get that opportunity again. I just needed to take advantage of it.

Yeah, obviously holding serve was tough for me today, so, you know, I had that pressure. But I was just trying to focus on my service games, because I knew that if I kept putting pressure on the return game she would feel it.

And also, I think that when you're playing these matches, if you're nervous or you're feeling the pressure, you have to know that your opponent is feeling it the same or even more sometimes.

So I think that's kind of what I had in my head, whether that thought is true or not, whether she wasn't feeling the pressure at all. But I think you kind of have to at least trick your mind to think that, because in these matches where you feel like you're down and out, you definitely need something to just grab onto, and that's what I needed today.

Q. You said the other day your mom was flying in for your birthday.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah.

Q. What's it like to have her here?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it was great. Almost thought she was a black cat because we lost in doubles yesterday and then I was losing today. I was like, yeah, you're not coming. No, I'm just kidding.

No, she's great. She knows me very well. I think she knows me probably better than anyone. She always has such a positive attitude. She keeps my dad calm too in the box. I don't think he would have gotten through today if she wasn't sitting next to him.

Yeah, she's like one of those people that just mediate the whole situation and I'm glad that she was able to make it out.

Q. You posted that video of you dancing around at Arthur Ashe Day back in the day. How many Arthur Ashe Days do you remember going to as a kid? Do you remember that one specifically?

COCO GAUFF: Yes, I remember that one. I think that was the only Arthur Ashe Kids' Day that I went to, but I did go to US Open like for a long time after, like after that, until I started playing the junior tournament.

So I think that was the only Kids' Day. But I remember

that, because "Call Me Maybe" was trending, and I knew that video existed. I thought that my mom would have it because she keeps track of everything. It was really my dad who has it, so that's why we never found the video because I never thought to ask him.

I don't know. I just love that video and just the whole full-circle moment, you know, dancing and I even got to participate in Kids' Day. Yeah, I just love that video. "Call Me Maybe" was the song at that time. Even now I still love when they play it. I don't know whose number I was trying to get. I think I was eight years old, but I'm gonna use that pickup line now (smiling).

Q. Years ago, Ashe used to play out here. Your thoughts about Arthur Ashe, know a good deal about him or not so much?

COCO GAUFF: No, yeah, I know a great deal about him. And thoughts about him, I think he's definitely not just a pioneer of the sport but a pioneer of just the culture in general in doing what he's done and the way he handled himself, something that I look up to a lot.

Super grateful not only just to kind of play and be in the position where I am but just be able to play at US Open on Ashe Stadium. You know, I never got the opportunity to meet him, but I just, I don't know, I respect a great deal of him and his legacy. I know I am a product of that. Yeah, that's what I'm forever grateful for.

Q. You made quarterfinals or better at like four of your five events this year. They're all big events. That level of consistency for somebody as young as you is quite rare. Can you talk a little bit about what's the difference between the Coco that wasn't posting week in, week out results like this, and what is the key to kind of you being able to reach the second week deep runs so consistently in 2023?

COCO GAUFF: I think just really learning what to do and what not to do in those moments, where it's 30-All or deuce or down a breakpoint. I think just learning, and I'm still learning, but I do think I'm handling those situations better.

And also just resetting quickly. A lot of times after losses I would carry that loss from the previous week into the next week. I think I'm doing better at every setting and just taking each match and really learning from it instead of dwelling on it.

Still got a lot way to go. Hopefully pushing to keep this consistency and hopefully even keep making finals later, hopefully this tournament, but for the rest of the season.

Yeah, I think it's definitely tough, especially when the tour is so, I guess, congested in a little way. But I think it really just comes from the experience I've gotten so lucky to have early on, and hopefully I can keep, I guess, improving on that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

