

BNP Paribas Open

Monday, March 11, 2024

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/L. Bronzetti

6-2, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Coco, great fight at the end. What does it mean to have a victory like that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it means a lot to come from the long match in the first round and be able to close it in straight sets in the second -- or third, I guess, technically. Hopefully I can keep building on that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Probably your last match as a teenager. Feel strange?

COCO GAUFF: No, not really (smiling). I mean, every year at this tournament it's going to be my last match of some age. So, yeah, it doesn't feel weird, no.

Q. The two matches you have played so far have been so tight. Can you put a finger on the reason? Is it conditions? Is it you're still trying to get into a rhythm? What is it?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, the first match is just the first round. Today was tight, but, you know, the first set was pretty straightforward. The second, you know, I was up a break. So, I don't know, I'm not really looking at it being tight. I played two tough opponents.

You know, she played well today. I think she, you know, has a tough game to play. She hits the ball, like, really flat and low and doesn't give you a lot of speed to generate so you have to do all the generating yourself, which is something you're not used to a lot in the women's game because a lot of the players are power players. So it was something to adjust to today.

Q. 20 is kind of a funny birthday in this country. You're full-on adult, still can't have a glass of wine. Have you been taking stock of it, though, because it is a pretty big milestone, not being a teen anymore and going into your 20s? How do you think of it in terms of

both tennis but also in terms of just Coco?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah. I mean, I haven't really thought about it tennis-wise or off the court, honestly.

Yeah, it's not like a huge milestone, you said, in the U.S., just turning another age. Yeah, no, a lot of people don't really think about it being not a teenager anymore. I think 21 is more the bigger age for more Americans. Yeah, I haven't really put too much thought in it.

Q. Does playing doubles make you a better singles player?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, definitely. I think if you look at all -- a lot, not all, but most of the top singles players in our sport, they've all had some success on doubles. Aryna, she played doubles. I think she has like two Grand Slams. Serena obviously had great success in doubles. I'm trying to think. Elena, Elena Rybakina, also, she played doubles a lot. So if we look at the top three -- Iga also played some doubles with Bethanie -- so if you look at the top three right now, all of us have played doubles.

If you look at the past, just legends of our sport, a lot of them played doubles. I think it definitely makes you a better singles player. Looking at this tournament, I just saw that Jannik Sinner is on court playing doubles.

I think it just gives you balls that you just don't see much in singles. Especially the net game and the transition game, and then there's definitely more pressure on the returns in doubles because you don't have the whole court to hit -- you do but you don't always want to hit at the net person. I think it helps develop games and also helps you work into a tournament as well.

Q. You don't worry about the toll it takes on your body as far as being ready for your singles game? You don't worry about that?

COCO GAUFF: No, not really. We practice twice a day, and if it comes to a point where I'm tired, obviously singles is going to be the priority and I'll pull out. But, you know, with the two-week, almost two-week format in the 1000s,



it's not really a concern, playing two twice-a-days is not really that difficult right now for me. If we win, we play tomorrow, and honestly, a doubles match is less physical, to be honest, than some of my practices I do at home.

Q. And you're only 19.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, age has something to do with it, but not really. My partner is 11 years older than me and she's doing both. So I don't think age is, like, that much of a factor.

Q. Today Brad Gilbert mostly seemed pretty calm while you were playing but in the tiebreak a few times I saw him start to kind of motion with his hands down. Can you say what he was trying to communicate to you and what you might have been doing that prompted him to start giving you signals like that?

COCO GAUFF: I honestly didn't see the downwards thing. I don't think I looked too much in the tiebreaker, so I honestly didn't see that. What it means, I'm assuming calm down, which sometimes I feel like it's more for him than me, because I wasn't too stressed, honestly, in that tiebreaker. Honestly the whole match I don't think I showed too much negative emotion.

Immediately after I miss a shot, I might, like, grimace or something, but that's normal. But yeah, sometimes I think it's more for him than me. Honestly, I didn't look in the tiebreaker. I knew what I needed to do to win. It was just executing, and I knew I needed to just speed my racquet head speed up and play the ball deeper, because she started to get a little more aggressive.

Q. You mentioned, I guess, after the US Open how it had been really important to you to win a slam as a teenager. Do you think that has changed sort of your mindset in approaching this mini milestone here?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think so. I think just I feel accomplished with what I wanted to do. It's good when you accomplish a goal that's so big. That's probably the only time-constraint goal I ever made for myself. Yeah, I think everything else is just whenever it happens it happens. Hopefully if it happens, it doesn't, whatever.

But yeah, I think that was the only time-constraint goal I had put on myself, which probably is more pressing, because especially with slams, there's only four of them. It's tough to win one (smiling). It's not something that you can just do, like, it's not like a 250 or 500 or something you have every week to play and you don't have too much experience winning one if you never won one.

I think that was just one of the main things for me was to try to do that. I guess now looking next, looking at what's next, yeah, 20 is a long time to play. So I don't have any time-constraint goals anymore on myself.

Q. Obviously at this point we don't know who you're going to be playing. If it's Elise Mertens, you have 3-0 record on her and you've never played her on the same surface twice.

COCO GAUFF: Okay. I didn't know that. Tennis has these stats, man (smiling).

Q. You have to fill space. And if you play Naomi, it's 2-All on the head-to-head. If you could just look at each player separately, so on BNP Paribas Open Radio we can get the right preview.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, Elise, she's definitely a tough player. I think almost every time I play her is a tough match. I don't recall any straightforward wins playing against her. Even though the record is 3-0, it could easily have been the opposite. She's tough. She has good strokes and she can hit the ball clean, she can serve well, she makes you earn the match.

Obviously Naomi is one of the champions of our sport and probably one of the best hard court players to play. I'm pretty sure the only times I've ever played Naomi is actually on hard court. And yeah, I think the only times I ever played her is on hard.

If I were to play her again it would be a fresh start for both of us, because for her, she's coming back and she's approaching the game with a fresh mentality. Then for me, it's different when you play somebody, I feel like last time I played her was a while ago, maybe over a year ago. So yeah, I think it's just going to be a tough match either way and hopefully I can bring the best game I can to approach those players, because it's going to be tough.

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