

BNP Paribas Open

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/Y. Yue

6-4, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Coco, through to the semifinals. Your thoughts on the match.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I'm really happy to be through today's match. It wasn't the best style of the serving, but overall I think when it comes to the groundstroke game and returns, everything else, honestly, I played well. I just try and take the positives into the next match.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. She's a fairly new opponent coming into the scene the last couple of weeks. How much did you know about her game and what, if anything, surprised you?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I didn't know much about her game. I watched her, maybe her second round, a little bit of that match, but I didn't watch last night, because I was just at dinner.

But, like, I saw she did well in Austin. So, yeah, I think for me coming in today, I did go in, not too much blind, because obviously I have a scouting report, but when you don't know that much from your own eyes it's tough sometimes.

I don't think anything surprised me. I think she played the way to what my team put together. So, yeah, I don't think too much surprised me. But yeah, it was definitely, you know, tough to play an opponent you don't know that much about. That's just due to my own not watching enough, but it happens.

Q. Was it the case of cake and steak last night, as you told my colleague Nick McCarvel?

COCO GAUFF: No, I didn't actually eat -- I did have steak tacos, actually, I did. I don't think it was the food. But, you know, we'll see. I won't eat cake and steak tonight, and if I serve better tomorrow, then I know not to do that again.

Q. Obviously at this point you don't know who you're up against, but if you want to comment on both players individually.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, Maria I've played a couple times now. I think the last time I played her was D.C. and that went my way. I think every time playing her, she's a tough opponent, she's very athletic and explosive. She doesn't give you much. She'll take advantage. You know, I've lost to her before and I've won before. It will be a tough match.

Emma, I played her earlier this year, and I played really well that match, it was probably one of the best ones I played this year. Not because of anything she was doing, it's just sometimes you wake up and you just feel god.

But she's very talented. I always, you know, watched her play and said she will give a lot of people trouble because she's very athletic, she mixes up the pace well. She has kind of like a variety of shots in her game.

I think both opponents will be a tough match tomorrow, and obviously both are playing well to make it this far in the tournament.

Q. Is that the sort of match where you think you might have lost a couple years ago when mentally you would have gotten frustrated? And it's obviously not the kind of match you're going to lose now, because you won it. But what is it that has changed in terms of how you get through a situation like that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I definitely think it's one of those matches I could have lost, and I have lost before in the past. I think for me the difference is that, you know, I know if one part of my game is off I have a lot of other tools I can rely on.

Today I pretty much just relied on me just out-rallying her and being aggressive. I think a lot of breakpoints that were saved were off of, like, at least on that second set, I just remember hitting, like, a lot of forehand winners.

Yeah, I think for me it was just I didn't let one part of my game affect the other parts, which I think I used to do.

Now I'm just trying to also not be too self-critical of myself where it damages me. So I think today was one of those things just trusting my other parts of the game.

Q. What are you telling yourself when your serve isn't doing what you think it should be doing?

COCO GAUFF: Well, today it was just make it, and that wasn't working. But, you know, I served after practice, and, you know, we came up with some things that I can remember to do when it feels a little bit uneasy. I think, you know, I haven't had a big double fault, like, match in a long time, so I just don't want to, you know, bring that into the next match.

Q. We've seen you for a long time, your competitiveness on court. You've told us you're really competitive with your brothers. I'd like you to talk a little bit about your competitiveness. Do you think that's your greatest strength? Do you feel it sort of energizes you in life in general? And who is the greatest competitor that you've faced? Serena or somebody else?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, my competitiveness I think is definitely probably my strength. I think it's not something that's taught or really learned. It's just one of those things you have to find deep down inside of you.

Yeah, I've always been like that my whole life. Hopefully I don't lose that spirit.

The greatest competitor that I have faced, let me think. Actually -- that I have seen, definitely Serena. I've never played her.

I'm trying to think of people that I've played that every time I play is very competitive. I would say Aryna Sabalenka, I think. She's an incredible competitor. This match a couple days ago kind of showed when she's down 40-Love and saved match points, she's just one of those players you play, and no matter the score you know she's always going to compete and find a way even if she's not playing her best.

Q. Does it just energize you? Does it make you feel more full as a person to have that competitive side to you?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, when I'm playing, yeah, it energizes me. But, I mean, I've only been like that my whole life so I don't know how to not be like that. It's a tough question for me to answer, because I don't really know any other way.

Q. It looks like a lot of success in tennis comes from having to string together a lot of these good days that you're talking about. Does your team study your habits, track your habits? Are you deliberately trying to see what makes you most likely to have a good day off court that can lead to those good days on court?

COCO GAUFF: Yes, I mean, I do have a routine pretty much, and I mean, I don't do anything too complicated. I think for me I have my best days when I am being well-rounded and not being too focused on the tournament. That was, like, a new approach that I tried last year, and after honestly Wimbledon, and it worked very well.

It has still worked. You know, I'm not going to win every tournament, but I've had successful runs in most of the tournaments I've played in since then.

Yeah, I think for me it's just making sure I have just a well-rounded life in general. Yeah, I think for me it's also not, if I do one thing, I don't think it's going to affect how I play the next day. As long as I mentally approach the match in a positive way, I think, you know, it can help me have a good day.

Honestly, a good day is just winning, but a great day is obviously winning and playing good (smiling).

Q. How aware were you of what was going on Stadium Court while you were playing, with the stoppage and the bees? Yourself, have you ever had an experience like that?

COCO GAUFF: I did not know about the bee situation until after the match.

Yeah, I was, like, kind of, when I looked on the score and I saw it was only like 2-1. I was, like, well, we played at the same time.

But that was crazy. I've never seen anything like that. Did Alcaraz actually get stung? Oh, he did. I heard that. I saw the video of him trying to, like, run away. I said he wasn't fast enough. He's a fast guy on the court, but I think he was trying to ask for clarification on what was going on. I would have just time violation, just leave (smiling).

That's just one of those things that I just, you can't defeat the bees. You know, he tried to swing his racquet, but there were just too many of them. I did feel bad for him. I'm glad he's not allergic. That would have been tough.

Yeah, that's the craziest thing I've ever seen happen at a tennis court, and hopefully it will never happen again, at least not to me (smiling).

Q. Carlos actually earlier in the week was talking about his experience on social media and maybe taking some of the negative comments to heart. As someone who has used them as motivation, I'm curious if there was ever a time when that wasn't the case. How important is it what you've done to develop a good relationship with social media where you're able to engage and also...

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it definitely was a thing in the past where I would take the comments to heart. I started on tour at 15, and, you know, went from overwhelming positive response to, you know, now there's pressure that you have to win and to where every loss was negative comments.

Honestly, I didn't know anything about that as a junior, didn't know anything about betters, to be honest, didn't realize how many people bet on the sport and how nasty the comments can get.

I was taking them to heart because I didn't know other players were experiencing it as well. I thought it was just a target thing. Then I realized almost every player or pretty much every pro player deals with it in some type of way. I took it not personal.

It was definitely a growing thing. Yeah, definitely something I will, I guess, urge our players, younger players coming up, just a warning, like, it's not personal. It's just unfortunately some nasty people out there and not to take it to heart. Yeah, it's just like I didn't know that when I started, so something I did have to learn.

Then, you know, I'm the type of person, you're going to see it anyways unless you, like, turn off your phone. I like getting into social media, as you said. It's just like you either use it to help you or use it to hurt you or completely ignore it, and ignoring it wasn't an option. You see it, so I just use it to help me.

I think you just have to make that choice for yourself and see what works best for you.

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