

BNP Paribas Open

Friday, March 6, 2026

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/K. Rakhimova

6-3, 7-6

THE MODERATOR: Coco, a great win out there today. Happy to get it done in two sets. Just tell us your thoughts on the match.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it was a tough match. Every time I play her, it's awkward. I felt like I was really struggling once the conditions slowed down. So, yeah, something to think about for the next match, but happy to get through it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How difficult is it to play your A game when the wind is blowing like that and then changes? What adjustments do you make?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think it's more so difficult when it's, like, slower and windy, because I feel like you have more time to think, so you're just overthinking everything.

I felt very comfortable when the new balls were in play, and then once it slowed down, it was just different, which usually is the opposite for me. But just getting used to the conditions here, she's someone that hits the ball super low, so I feel like if you don't time it really well, it's easy to make an unforced error against her.

So, yeah, I think I got a little bit passive in the second set and a little bit lazy with the footwork. Then I was able to pick it up.

Q. I can't really remember the exact point in the tiebreak, but there was a crazy point, just running around the court and you won the point. Rakhimova was across the net and just looked out of it. How is it for you to just trust your fitness, in a way, knowing that in tough situations like that specifically you'll get to the ball?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, I think I had to trust it a lot today. She started really pressing, and honestly, I felt like when the conditions are, like, super slow, I feel like once

you're, like, ahead of the point, it's kind of hard to, like, get off from the defense, because I feel like some of the balls I normally hit would go land a little deeper, have a little bit more bounce to them, and when the balls are dead, it's just not happening for me.

Yeah, I figured once I got behind in the points, I knew it was going to be, most likely, an unforced error. Usually I'm pretty good at changing it from defense to offense, but I think it's just something I have to get used to, maybe make some adjustments with the tension.

But, yeah, I think overall I felt like that won me a lot of points today.

Q. Emma Raducanu was talking about the possibility of having periods where she wouldn't have a coach or didn't have, like, a main coach. I just wonder if that was something you ever considered or what that would look like, kind of self-coaching?

COCO GAUFF: I don't think it would go well (smiling). There are tournaments where I maybe don't listen to my coach that much at all, so maybe it is self-coach.

No, I think, I mean, for me personally, I feel like it's always good to have some direction. I feel like the team I have now, they don't overcoach. They let me, you know, think it through. Like today I didn't look at my box for advice once. That's how I usually prefer it.

But, you know, I don't know, I think it's nice to have a coach with you, but every player is different. I know some players can play well without one, and some prefer just maybe someone like a hitting partner/coach.

But I feel like with all the changes I'm making in my game, I think I would get pretty lost without one.

Q. Well played. A question about using the crowd to your favor. When you play here in the States, places like Indian Wells, Miami, US Open, are you comforted by the fact that you have that in your pocket that if you need a little moment, a little pick-me-up, you can go to the crowd and rally them? I asked Frances about it

earlier, and he said sometimes he uses it in spots but he's careful with it. What's your philosophy on it?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I don't really strategically use it. I think only if I hit a great shot then I'll, like, do my hand and tell them to get louder.

It's not something I really strategically think of, but I definitely think the crowd does help. More so, I don't think they affect the opponent. I think it's just more so a pick-me-up for you.

Sometimes hearing a couple extra cheers can stop the negative thoughts about yourself. I definitely think having the home crowd can change the way you approach the match or approach the next point, for sure.

Q. A question about a couple of Americans that are having strong starts to the season, one on the younger side and one on the older side. Yeah, Iva Jovic, wonder about your thoughts on her progress, and Jessica Pegula in terms of her growth as a leader in the sport. Can you talk about those two players?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, Iva is obviously doing great. I think she's a very solid player and is definitely going to continue to do damage on tour, for sure. Very nice girl off court too.

And obviously Jess, someone I know pretty well. Yeah, I think she just keeps getting better. You know, I think it's very great to see, like, someone maybe at her age, like, continuing to peak. Honestly, gives me a lot of inspiration too just knowing, I hope I can have a career as good as hers when I'm later in, down the road.

But no, I think what Jess did in Dubai was pretty incredible, especially that match against Amanda. She kind of looked like she was out of it and was able to come back and win that.

Yeah, I think, you know, both of them are great people off the court too, so they're easy to root for. I think that's why fans seem to support them a lot too.

Q. Women athletes have historically had a lot of social trouble with gender expression, being deemed too masculine, and if they're too feminine, it's almost demeaning. I wonder now that ATP is doing these athlete arrivals with all the fashion, do you think if the WTA did something like that for the women, is there a risk it would be seen as frivolous, take away from the athleticism, or are we at a good place that you can publicly be both to a global audience?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think there is nothing that an

athlete can really do to take away from the athleticism that they have. How we perform on court -- or what we do off court has nothing to do with how we perform on court. I haven't seen the ATP arrival thing, so I guess I need to look at that, see what outfits the guys are putting out.

No, I think it's a great thing. There was a little thing, WTA did it, was it last year or two years ago, Cincinnati, a couple players participated in that, and I thought that was really cool.

I enjoyed doing that. I know with every match it might be pretty hard, but I think definitely at least for press day it can be something that we can elevate a little bit more and make it more fun.

No, I don't think it will take away that. There is always going to be people that tell women to focus on the court, not focus on yourself, blah, blah, blah. I think that's what's the beautiful thing about being also a female athlete is that you can express yourself in so many ways.

Just being a woman in general around the world I think there is a lot of ways you can express yourself. Yeah, I hope we can showcase that more, because there's a lot of girls on tour who dress nice off the court, but we just don't always have the time to show it.

Q. You mentioned on court your confidence in tiebreaks. You're 59-30.

COCO GAUFF: Is that good? I guess?

Q. It's pretty good. What makes you so good?

COCO GAUFF: I played that many tiebreakers in my life? Oh, my gosh. I feel, like, old. I thought it was closer to, like, 20 tiebreakers overall (smiling).

59, okay. What makes me... I don't know, honestly. I think I'm pretty confident in my return, so I feel like I know I'm always going to get, I don't know, most of the time one of the two return points almost on every swing.

Then after that, it's just more so my serve. Also, I think fitness-wise, obviously tiebreakers are usually later in the match, so I think I'm able to just get that extra ball back, be mentally there.

Yeah, I think just also having the confidence of doing well in tiebreakers. I feel like my last few, except -- my last few, yeah, I have done pretty well. In Dubai, I saved some match points in both my matches in tiebreakers, so that gave me confidence today, playing a set up instead of a set behind.

