

Billie Jean King Cup

Friday, 14 April 2023

Team USA

Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/J. Grabher

6-1, 6-3

USA - 1

Austria - 0

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Coco, good match tonight. I'm curious, what were your thoughts? A delayed start with the rain, but coming out and playing a great match on your home court.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, like I said on the court, I wanted to protect the house. Had a very warm welcome, which I knew that was going to happen. It was a very special moment out there for me today playing for my country, my home city.

Q. What does it mean to get your first singles win in Billie Jean King Cup?

COCO GAUFF: It means a lot. I was very, very hurt after my loss in Glasgow. I didn't want to do that for the team. I'm glad I was able to pull it out for the team today and hopefully continue that on for the rest of the weekend.

Q. You mentioned on your sneaker you drew or lettered Pompey Park.

COCO GAUFF: No, it's on my sneaker. It's not drawn on. It's made in the shoe. It's been like that. A lot of people don't notice.

Q. This sneaker was released...

COCO GAUFF: ...last year. Had an artist paint it to make it, like, have those colors and stuff like that.

Q. What does that place mean to you?

COCO GAUFF: I grew up there. It's where I started tennis

BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

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pretty much. Me and my dad. My brothers played baseball there. I spent a lot of time there. Even now. My grandfather founded the baseball league there. Still to this day is coaching.

It's a family thing. That's why it's on my shoe. A lot of locals know that place very dearly.

Q. You talked about protecting your home turf, Delray Beach, playing in front of your friends and family, playing for the USA. How do you compartmentalize all that pressure and produce such a great match?

COCO GAUFF: Just embrace it. I mean, I'm in a very privileged position to be able to play tennis, be able to do it here. I'm just embracing it, embracing the home crowd.

I was a little bit nervous going out there today. I can't imagine I feel like the Austrians are feeling. Those girls are probably feeling more nervous being the underdogs and playing not at a home tie, when I saw the stat. Whether it's true or not, these are things to tell yourself to psych yourself out. Maybe they're feeling great. Some people play great when they have no pressure.

That's what I told myself. It's probably not true. But you do things to make yourself feel better whether it's true or not.

Q. You talked about the team chemistry. What is it like playing with your friends? Is it cool?

COCO GAUFF: It's so cool. I literally told my team my favorite part about this is honestly cheering a little bit more than playing, which is very weird because I don't like watching tennis that much, to be honest.

This atmosphere you can cheer really easily. I'm just really excited to finish this up and go out there and watch Jess. I think she's up 2-0 now. Might go pretty fast.

Q. Can you talk about Kathy Rinaldi as captain? What is she like to play for?

COCO GAUFF: She's so supportive to play for on the court. She's a great person to have in your ear. So positive. I don't know if people saw the TikTok, but she's

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always down for things like that with the team.

I remember my first tie ever, I had her doing like the 'Respect the Drip Karen' thing was trending and I had her doing that.

I mean, when it's time to come down, get to business, get dirty, she's there, too. I just love playing for her, and I wouldn't ask for anybody else to be our captain.

Q. There's a lot of little kids out there who are from Palm Beach County, boys and girls, black boys and girls. What does that do for your career knowing you're motivating these young kids around your area?

COCO GAUFF: It means a lot to me seeing all those kids in the crowd, so happy to see us play. Like, I mean, I remember being that kid. I was that kid a couple years ago watching Serena and Venus. I'm nowhere near the level of them, but maybe can I have like 10% of what they did for tennis, maybe I can do that in the future. Maybe a little bit now, half a percent now.

Q. After a big win like this, what does this do for your confidence going into tomorrow? Nerves less than coming in today?

COCO GAUFF: 100%. Just knowing I did my job today, it makes it a little bit easier going into tomorrow. I think when you're starting up with the lead, hopefully Jess can take care of business, even if we have a tie, it's better than starting as a deficit, it gives me a lot of confidence going into tomorrow.

Q. The strategy against her today, looked like you overpowered her with serves and baseline shots. What were you thinking was going to be the key? Do you feel you executed it perfectly?

COCO GAUFF: Obviously that was the strategy. I was trying to win the point being aggressive on the first couple shots. I know she doesn't really like that. I think she prefers the clay a little bit more, at least the way her game style is. I knew with these courts it was first-strike tennis. That's what I tried to do today.

Sometimes I probably played a little bit more patient tennis because her ball is a little heavy. I could always step in when I wanted to. That was pretty much the goal. I knew I had the strength over her and the aggressiveness over her, so that was pretty much the game plan.

Thank you.

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