

Billie Jean King Cup

Saturday, 15 April 2023

Team USA

Captain Kathy Rinaldi

Coco Gauff

Caty McNally

Press Conference

MCNALLY-GAUFF/Klaffner-Kraus

6-1, 6-4

USA - 4

Austria - 0

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Kathy, you said last night you're super competitive and looking forward to bringing home another Cup. What does it mean to be back in the Billie Jean King Cup finals?

CAPTAIN RINALDI: All credit to the girls this week, to our incredible staff around us, too. It's been just a great week, special week to play here in our home state, our home, for some of us right in our backyard. It's something that I will remember.

The fans coming out, staying for the doubles, even though Jess clinched it. But we're very excited to get back to the final. That's just a great accomplishment.

I think knowing all of the American women, they're all competitive, so I'm sure they're going to want to bring that Cup home, too.

Q. Caty and Coco, you reunited as a team at the finals last year. Here you are again playing for your country. What was the atmosphere like out there?

CATY MCNALLY: Yeah, it's always so much fun when I can play with Coco. Really special. We haven't played together since the last finals. When we got on the court, I feel it's kind of like we haven't missed a beat.

Today it was kind of tough with the conditions, so I think we're getting a little bit used to it. I still feel like we have

BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

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that chemistry that's extremely special.

We get along so well off the court. We kind of carry that on the court. We try to have fun. We know each other's game styles really well, we know what works. I think that helps out a lot.

I'm just super lucky, even though the tie was over, I'm happy I was able to play with you.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I always have a fun time on the court with Caty. Last time I guess we had a little bit more pressure because we had to clinch that to do well in the group standings. We really crushed that match.

Today obviously a lot freer coming into the match. I was really excited. I love playing with Caty. She's such a fun person on and off the court.

Yeah, I don't think you can tell it's been a while since we played with each other.

Q. Coco, how did you come up with the idea of the headphones with the flag on it? You huddled quite a bit. What's the most important things you talk about?

COCO GAUFF: Nothing important (laughter).

So the headphones, yeah, I wanted to do something for the team. I just started working with Bose, so they helped me come up with the idea of custom headphones, USA headphones. That was the thought behind that.

The huddle? We don't really huddle. I mean, it's not about tennis. I don't know.

CATY MCNALLY: TikTok.

COCO GAUFF: We were supposed to do a TikTok.

We don't really have huddles, but when we do, it's not about anything important.

CAPTAIN RINALDI: Probably complaining about me (laughter).

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COCO GAUFF: Right before the match, Jess told me she wanted some drums to drum on the sideline. She liked the Drum Line, a huge fan of the Drum Line.

Yeah, that's how our convos go, TikTok, whatever is happening in the world of tennis, drama, all that.

Q. How awesome was it to get Coco and Caty back together? Did you lobby your captain? Can you talk about how you ended up together today?

COCO GAUFF: At least from my end, right after Jess won, she is like, Do you want to play?

Sure.

She was like, It's your hometown so it will be good for you.

I think Caty found it when they announced it. We didn't have to lobby.

CAPTAIN RINALDI: It wasn't quite like that. We did talk about it this morning.

COCO GAUFF: I wasn't there.

CAPTAIN RINALDI: I didn't want to bother the girls that were playing singles.

You come into a match at 2, you don't want to let your guard down and take anything for granted. I kept that talk to the other girls and said, We'll see what happens with Jess' match, went through that scenario. There was a good chance.

Spoke to Caty and her mother this morning hoping that Coco, if Jess did win, that Coco would want to play. She was focusing on the singles at that point. Just trying to be very intentional with that communication.

Once it was over, I huddled with Coco, then spoke with Caty and her mom.

Q. Could you feel the love and excitement? The crowd was wild. Were you both feeling that?

CATY MCNALLY: I feel like anywhere we go, we feel the love from it. It's something really special. I feel like we kind of developed it a couple years ago when we started playing, filling stadiums. It was the craziest thing I've ever experienced.

But, yeah, to come back out there and see everyone stick around, want to watch us play. I definitely get goose bumps, it's a really cool moment.

We'll play more down the road. I'm not really worried about that. For now, that was just a special moment, so... Just another one to cherish.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, the fact that the crowd stayed for doubles, also considering the scoreline, I think that shows that people were excited to see us play.

It's really special, memories of Caty, playing especially US Open, Louis Armstrong, full to the top top. I don't even remember the last time that has happened for a women's doubles match.

Yeah, I think we're just a great team on and off the court. I think people see how much fun we have playing together. I think watching it is fun as well.

Q. Kathy, you mentioned the level of talent you have. It's a blessing, but can be I don't want to say a curse.

CAPTAIN RINALDI: I'll take the blessing (laughter).

Q. How do you manage that?

CAPTAIN RINALDI: Yeah, I think again you're coming here, we all have one goal in mind, and that's to win. It's something bigger than us.

Everybody here is a star, at the top of the game. I think when we come together, they understand, too, to win we have to have camaraderie, we have to have a bond.

You can bring the greatest teams together, but if there's not a good chemistry, you're not going to get through. So I think everybody played their role and everybody was just so supportive of one another. That's really as a captain what you're looking for.

Yes, it was important Jess and Coco got us off to a great start, they're on court playing. But it's just as important on the bench to be there for each other, know you have a bench that really wants to win. We all share that one goal of getting back to the final.

I really think that the players understand that and they're great about it. I think they're competitive. They want to play. I don't blame them, which is a great thing that they want to play.

At the end if we get the win, I think everybody understands.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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