

China Open

Sunday, September 28, 2025

Beijing, China

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/L. Fernandez

6-4, 4-6, 7-5

THE MODERATOR: Coco, that was a really tough fight out there. Your thoughts on the performance.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I played Leylah earlier this year and I knew it was going to be a tougher match today just because I felt like she was playing some good tennis. She beat Maria, like, in a good score. All the matches she won in DC. I knew she would approach this match differently. I had to adjust.

But I'm happy to get through.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Leylah is always a tough opponent. What was the biggest challenge today? What adjustments do you feel you made throughout the match to get the win?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, the conditions were so slow, which I feel like she does well with that because she likes to take the ball so early. So I felt like my heaviness wasn't doing a lot with her, like, as the balls got older.

I found when I had new balls, I would win like two or three games in a row. I think the toughest part was just dealing with the conditions and trying to feel like I could hit through her, but I couldn't do that as well today as I felt like I did earlier this year.

Q. What happened in the second set that really led you to lose your focus or maybe lose your stamina in that set?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, it was a back-and-forth set. I had chances I think in the 2-All or 3-2 game to break. I felt like I got a little bit too passive. Then that last game, couple doubles. I don't even remember what happened.

But she played well. I mean, I knew, like, how the first set went, it was kind of back and forth. A couple points don't

go your way and you lose the set.

But yeah, she definitely played great tennis. I thought she was being aggressive, striking the ball pretty well. She wasn't really giving me much free points either.

Yeah, I think I wish I was more aggressive in some moments. I could tell she stepped up the aggressiveness in the second. I think in that 3-2 game on those break points I should have put the ball deeper and maybe tried to get her to open up the court.

Q. Non-tennis or match question. Since you broke away and went independent on the management side of things, there seem to have been a few developments, new associations. Can you explain what does IROC mean and also the new connection with Religion of Sport? How involved are you going to be with people like Tom Brady and Michael Strahan and Chopra, as well? Is there a potential of it also being a distraction, maybe a good distraction?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, do you mean what IROC means, the actual name?

Q. Yes.

COCO GAUFF: IROC is my real name spelled backwards. It's Cori spelled backwards. I think my mom came up with it when I was younger. I played Little Mo. My grandma made visors and named them IROC because it was just my name backwards. My parents always said, Oh, that could be something one day. I was like, Well, I don't have much names.

I don't know. I think everybody can relate to IROC (smiling). So that was the thought process behind the name. It's something I've had my whole life.

As far as the Religion of Sports, I'm going to be involved obviously in things that I do. But I think partnering with them is helping me keep my focus onto tennis and allowing them to put my vision out there without me being so much on hand.



I haven't met Tom Brady or Michael Strahan or anything like that. I've had a couple meetings with Religion of Sport, the people behind it, which I'm super excited. We just are really in the beginning. I can't tell you if there's any projects. We don't have anything lined up as of yet.

But yeah, I always wanted to do this, be executive producing some things. Partnering with them I think allows me to focus more on tennis and letting them kind of carry out the projects and things that I want to do, and having a great team behind that.

No, the focus will always be on tennis. The partnership was mainly to keep that focus instead of maybe just trying to do it on my own.

Q. You're saying no specific projects, but what is the connection with Naked Juice?

COCO GAUFF: Well, yeah, I mean, there's two things. There was going to be the branded content, which is kind of what I already have done with Naked Juice. That stuff is already out.

I meant more so like bigger projects, like films, short films or documentaries. We've done branded content. It's producing stuff, but it's on a smaller thing. It's a one-minute, two-minute reel. My real passion is longer-form content of scripted and unscripted series.

Q. I have a non-tennis question, which is about Unrivaled League. I saw you became an investor in the Unrivaled League. I saw you posted a picture with Breanna Stewart and Napheesa Collier. When did you initiate, decide to make this move to join this league, to become one of the owners, if I can say that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, no, I'm an investor in it. I think the idea came, A, because I saw a lot of other prominent names being invested in the league. I'm like, Okay, I want to do it.

Also Micky Lawler, she's the head of league. I don't know the right term to put it in. She's coming from tennis. I had that personal connection with her. Her and the team of Unrivaled asked if I wanted to be involved. Of course, the answer was yes because I love basketball, probably my second favorite sport outside of tennis. I love the WNBA.

I think this gives a lot of the players a different option to do outside of season. Honestly, the way Micky did it, I went and visited all the facilities, it's really a lot modeled after tennis. They have the nursery, the locker rooms. You could tell that the whole foundation was modeled after tennis.

A lot of the players were excited about it, which made me feel grateful for my sport. I'm like what their conditions, what they have, is kind of typical to what we have on tour. For them it's like a plus and they don't really have that. I think for me it was really cool to kind of have that standard. I think Unrivaled has raised the standard for women's basketball. I think a lot of WNBA teams are following notion on that and creating these better practice facilities for players.

Q. We have lots of non-tennis questions to ask you.

COCO GAUFF: It's good. I play tennis a lot, so it's good to talk about this stuff. I like it (smiling).

Q. Fans here adore you every day, which shows Chinese and American can understand each other and like each other, even though our nations have some conflicts sometimes. Can you talk about the power of sport to get the difference between different cultures and how proud you are to make your contribution at such a young age.

COCO GAUFF: Oh, I love sport. I think that's my favorite thing about being an athlete, is just the fact that I get to travel the world and experience different cultures. If it wasn't for tennis, I don't think I would financially be able to afford my way to China. I definitely would have had the want to come here. I'm just really grateful.

I will say the Chinese fans have been the nicest fans on tour by far. Just the gifts and everything. I'm going to post a picture at the end of this tournament of all the gifts. It's more gifts than I've gotten on Christmas, and I was a pretty spoiled kid (smiling). It's just insane.

They're so nice. Every time someone gives me a gift, it's so personalized. You can tell they've been thinking about this thing or got something made for a couple weeks before I came here.

It makes me want to come to this tournament because I don't want someone to make something for me and I don't show up. Every time, unless I'm injured, I'm going to definitely come here to Beijing because I love it.

Q. Most 21-year-olds are still in college. You travel the world and play tennis. I'm not sure if you get used to the life, or is there some mornings you wake up and you can't believe what an amazing life you're living?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, there's definitely moments. Like, honestly here, every day I've woken up here feeling so much grateful for the amount of people that like me here



(smiling). I ask them, Why do you guys like me? They're like, We love the personality.

For me it means a lot when they say that instead of my tennis or the way I played. It makes me seen more as a person.

Every day I've woken up here, I definitely feel that gratefulness. Now I want to take that more on the road. I don't know if I'll get as many gifts elsewhere in the world. I hope the western side of the world can be as nice as the Chinese fans are with the gift giving because I love gifts. I love being spoiled. I like receiving things. It's fun.

Yeah, I love it here. And I love my life that I live, for sure.

Q. Last press conference you said you asked for the Chinese fans to give you a nickname relative to animal.

COCO GAUFF: Yes.

Q. Have you ever got one that make you satisfied?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, there was a fan, his name is Hans (phonetic). He told me I'm the wolf. I need to ask him why he chose that. I don't see myself as a wolf. I feel like a wolf is a little bit more serious. Maybe I'm like that on the court. Wolves are pretty animals. It's my boyfriend's favorite animal, I'm pretty sure. I'll take it.

If I had to choose an animal, I really love Orcas, killer whales. I think they're really cool. I watch like a bunch of documentaries on them.

I'm rambling. I'll shut up. Thank you, guys (laughter).

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