

Australian Open

Friday, 12 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Coco, welcome back to Melbourne. How does it feel playing the Australian Open as a singles Grand Slam champion?

COCO GAUFF: It doesn't feel any different, to be honest. It's in the past. Hopefully I can win another one here.

But I think I'm just focused on improving with each match and with each practice, and we'll see what happens.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Off of your success in Auckland, getting especially that test in the final, how do you feel coming into Melbourne, where your game is at? Give us a sense of where you think your level is at the moment.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think pretty much overall in Auckland I played some really good tennis. In the final, I had chances to win that first set, and lost that. I think that was a good mental test. Hopefully doesn't happen here, hopefully every set point I get here I'm able to win the set.

I think having that tough match in the final definitely made me more confident. Elina, she did well at Wimbledon, beat Iga, has done consistently well at all the slams. She's not an easy person to beat.

Then throughout the previous matches, I think just being able to play so well, especially with the pressure of being the No. 1 seed and defending champion, I think it will hopefully prep me for later on this season when that will probably happen more often.

Q. Your service motion is looking a bit different, more abbreviated. What was the process of making that change, and what you're trying to achieve?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think for me, it was a very small change. It only took me, like, two days to get - maybe three - to get really comfortable with it. It was just to make the toss more consistent. Instead of throwing from so low to start up higher to make the toss more consistent.

Yeah, other than the final in Auckland, I think I served really well. I hit probably the most aces I've hit consistently in matches or most unreturnables, I think I was at 80% or 90% first-serve points won. It was a good change. Hopefully I can continue that serving throughout.

Sometimes I still have to remind myself of it. I think for the most part I was really open to it. I think my serve is something that when it's on, it's a really big weapon and can get me out of some situations. Just to make it more consistent was the goal.

Q. What is the process like from moving on from winning your first Grand Slam title and getting back to the grind, trying to do it all over again? How long does that take you to mentally say, Okay, that thing happened, it was great, next?

COCO GAUFF: I think a week. Yeah, I think probably around that. When I went into China, I pretty much had it out of my head. Then during the off-season we did celebrate a little bit just because after the US Open, everything was so fast.

Now going into another slam, it really feels like so long ago. I kind of forget it happened because I feel like my whole life... It depends on the players. Some player's goal is to win a Grand Slam. Once they reach that, it's kind of what's next.

For me, I always knew I wanted to win multiple. It was kind of easy to forget about it. Not 'forget'. I think that's the wrong word. Maybe just put it in the past and look forward to the future instead of dwelling on the past.

I think for me the only thing I will try to remember from that slam is just the way that I won. It wasn't my best tennis. It was more so the mental fire. I had some gutty matches. I think that confidence will bring me into Australian Open this year, probably even more slams for the rest of the season.

Q. A bit of a random question. I remember seeing during the off-season, you posted a video of yourself training with an eye patch. Is that a new drill? What do you get out of that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I've done it a couple times, mainly



in the warm-ups with just hand-eye coordination. That's really all it is, hand-eye coordination. It's no, like, special thing. It's just to see how good my hand-eye is.

I think it also forces me to keep my eyes on the ball. I think I'm right-eye dominant. It was obviously more challenging seeing from my left side when you're more dominant on one side. I didn't even know that was a thing.

Yeah, that was just something I did for hand-eye coordination. I actually did better than I thought I would. I haven't done it since I've been here. I've done it tossing tennis balls, but I haven't hit with it since.

Q. You mentioned your goal has always been to win multiple slams. Has there ever been a number in your head of a target?

COCO GAUFF: Not really, to be honest. I mean, I would say recently I feel like I wanted to get double-digits. That's, like, cool. But there's no number.

Yeah, who knows? That could change depending on how my career goes. Right now I would say double-digits would be pretty awesome. I don't know if it will happen, but I think that's a high goal. I think setting my goals high pushes me beyond what I think I can do.

Q. In terms of your goals, specifically this season, how do the Olympics feature and change things for you, both singles and doubles? Is that a big goal for you?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, one of the goals I wrote down on my vision thing, vision note - in my phone - was to win a medal in the Olympics.

For me, I'll be completely honest, I don't really care what event it is in. I feel like a gold, silver, or bronze, whatever medal it is, is one of those things it doesn't matter. Well, it does matter. Obviously I want to win in singles. I feel like I would appreciate it just as much whether it was in singles or doubles. It's not the same to me as a slam I guess in a way.

I just put I want a medal at any of the events. Ideally I would want to play all three. We'll have to see where I fall in the lineup of ranking-wise and all of that.

Yeah, that definitely is a priority. The Olympics have been a priority in both singles and doubles.

Q. What do you think you learned the most from your experience of winning the US Open? How are you going to utilize this in preparation for the upcoming Australian Open?

COCO GAUFF: I think the biggest thing I've learned is

that tennis, if more than anything, a mental game. Honestly, from Wimbledon to US Open, I improved, but not to the point where I go there's a drastic difference between first round and winning a slam.

Yeah, I improved, but I think it was more so the mental side I improved. I think that for me, I know the value and the power of the mind. I think I need to remember that for the rest of my life. Even when I feel like I'm not playing great, your mind can change things. I think that was the difference between Wimbledon and the US Open.

I improved a little bit, but not to the point where it's first round to winner. It was more so the mind. I completely changed my mindset. I think that was the biggest thing I learned, trying to stay mentally focused on every point, every match, and just being positive.

Q. On the topic of playing three events at the Olympics, do you have the guys jockeying for mixed doubles position with you and Jess? What do they need to do to convince you they're the one?

COCO GAUFF: I honestly haven't, like, really reached out. I don't know if anyone's reached out to me, unless they've DM'd me, which I haven't seen.

I'm guessing ideally it will be between the top two mixed doubles guys. Jess already plays with Austin, so I imagine I'm going to play with Rajeev if he wants to play.

I'd have to look. Last year was two mixed teams, last Olympics, but I don't know if it's the same thing.

Yeah, it would be pretty cool. I would be happy to play with whoever. I'll try my best to hold my side of the court, so yeah.

Q. Not many people in tennis have their own signature shoes. What have you learned about designing shoes that you didn't know before?

COCO GAUFF: I don't know. I guess the biggest thing is I learned how much goes into a shoe, in making a shoe, in that it's not as simple as it seems. Let alone a performance shoe, not just a regular shoe.

Yeah, when we were doing the CG1s, it took a couple years to find the fit and also the look I wanted. I wanted it to look like a basketball shoe. People ask me if that's something they brought to me. That was my idea. If I could play with high tops, I would. That's a little bit too complicated. So the mid was my idea. I wanted all the colors to be bright 'cause that's what I like to wear on court. We have some basic colors, too.

So yeah, I think the biggest thing I've learned is how hard it is to make a performance shoe also cater to be

lifestyle. That was the goal.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

Yeah, there's a lot of people that play tennis, but more people who watch me probably don't play or just watch tennis. I wanted them to actually buy the shoe and wear it to, like, dinner or something, not just to play tennis in.

Q. How particular are you with the fit of the shoe, how it feels?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, for me stability was the most important thing because I do hard cuts, I do slide. Obviously durability. I like to change my shoes every three to four matches. Yeah, that's really good for a tennis shoe the way I use them. I think for me the stability was the most important thing, to make sure when I do those hard cuts, that it's able to support me.

Q. Back to what you said about the mindset change. You changed your mindset from what to what? How did you do that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, the mindset change, I think I put too much pressure on winning a slam. I think I was feeling like I have to do it. When I went on the scene at 15, I felt like I had to win a slam as a teenager because that's what everybody thought.

Honestly, going into US Open, I didn't expect it. I felt like I was having a bad season, and my focus was just get through the season and focus on the Australian Open this year.

Then, yeah, I think putting that mindset just relaxed me a lot. I was just taking it match by match. At the end of the day, the worst thing that happened to me at Wimbledon was I could lose first round. That wasn't even that bad. Obviously, it sucked. The world didn't end. The sun still shines. I still have my friends and family. I realized that losing isn't all that bad, and that I should just focus on the battle and the process and enjoy it. When it's 5-All in the third set, enjoy that battle instead of thinking, What if I lose?

That was the biggest mindset. I found myself being able to play freer and trust myself more.

Q. How does it feel when you walk out on court and so many people are looking up to you?

COCO GAUFF: I try not to feel that feeling honestly. A lot of times I walk on court -- actually the last couple years I've gotten comfortable at waving at the crowd and looking up at the crowd. Usually have my headphones on full-volume blast because I don't like to hear the crowd because it makes me nervous.

Yeah, I usually try not to feel that feeling. I try to block it out (smiling).

