

Australian Open

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Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/A. Schmiedlova

6-3, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Coco, a very solid first-round performance. How did it feel out there on Rod Laver Arena?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I felt good. I was a little bit nervous coming in today. Probably could tell. I was able to just calm down and then play my good, not my best, but good tennis from that point.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You said "look good, feel good" on the court. Your kit, am I right that it's an homage to Serena?

COCO GAUFF: No, no.

Q. Is that a completely fake-news thing?

COCO GAUFF: Yes. So I saw that tweet -- and that account is going to be happy they are being mentioned -- but I saw that tweet and then I texted my agent. I was, like, I don't remember ever saying this. Then the person replied or something and it was, like, a fake tweet. Their account said don't take things seriously. Then I realized it was fake.

Yeah, if you want to make it a homage to her, that's really cool. That wasn't the thought process behind it. I love Serena, and I think she has the best fashion game on the court and off the court and everything.

So, yeah, it wasn't an homage to her, but it was funny how that tweet kind of circulated. I know that account was probably, like, going to laugh at this (smiling).

Q. I know you talked about your serve in the last press conference, but Brad said you had worked with Andy. Just wondering what that was like. I'm sure every tennis player in the world would want Andy to help them with their serve. What was that experience like?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it was really cool. He's a really chill guy. I met him before but never, like, obviously to

that level. Yeah, I went to Charlotte for two days. Yeah, it was a really good two days. I think that my serve has improved.

I think I just need to continue to trust it and trust all the work that I did in the offseason. He's probably, you know, one of the best servers in history, and especially on the American side. So, yeah, I don't think I could have chosen anybody -- or actually, I didn't really choose, he offered. So I don't think I could have gotten anybody else better to kind of help me with that.

Q. This is your last Grand Slam as a teenager, but there is many others playing in the tournament. Mirra Andreeva is playing this afternoon. I don't know if you've been following her game lately and what do you make of it?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I played her twice, both in Grand Slams. The first time was on clay and that was a tough three-setter, and the second time was at the US Open this past year. I think she's an incredible player. I think that, you know, she's going to have a great future ahead of her.

I don't know her personally that well. I practiced with her once. But from, you know, from what I've gotten, she's a really nice and really sweet girl. I have seen some of her pressers. She seems like she's, like, soft-spoken.

Yeah, I didn't check who she was playing, but, you know, whoever she's playing, it's going to be a tough match for them.

Q. You posted about the USTA's image of U.S. players, and I know you said you were bored in the middle of the night. Can you explain what happened and have you had any contact from the USTA?

COCO GAUFF: Oh, people thought I was being serious, that I was actually mad with it. And I realize TikTok humor is very different than Twitter. I saw somebody posted, like, There's no way she's that (indiscernible) over it.

I was like, no, I wasn't mad. We looked awful (smiling). And actually, I saw Ben post first on his story. Then I DM'd Ben immediately and I was like, What is this? Then Jess started texting me. We were just, like, laughing at

each person, we were laughing at Sebi's, I think Ben and Sebi had the worst ones.

I know it was from a cartoon, and the artist, like, did great with the cartoon. I just don't know if I want myself drawn as that art style. I said I would prefer, like, Brad's because they look good and they are fashion and everything. But we did not look good at all (smiling).

Usually, USTA always does the seed, the hype posts or whatever before the slams. I was, like, they all should have posted this on April Fool's Day or something. It was a funny thing in the chat.

Then I was literally, I practiced at 10:00 and then I was back in my room at 1:00 and I didn't leave my room until this morning, so I was quite literally deep on my phone. So, yeah, I was just bored and commenting and making fun of it, because everybody else was making fun of us how bad we looked.

Then, yeah, I saw on Twitter people thought I was serious, but I wasn't. It was all in jokes. I did DM the USTA account and I was, like, what was the thought process behind this, as a joke. They never responded. I got left on read by USTA, which sucks. But, you know, it is what it is.

Shout-out to, I think it's Wild Thornberrys is the cartoon. Shout-out to them for making us look funny.

Q. On the topic of the serve, you have such a live arm and always had such a live arm. I remember you hitting 118, 119 when you were 15. Have you talked to Brad, Andy, anybody else in your coaching team in the years about how to maintain that, about why it doesn't always come off at that speed? Do you even want it to come off always at that speed?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, so the why is more like a mental thing. Yeah, there is nothing physically that stops me from bombing a serve. I think sometimes, you know, even in the past -- and I feel like now I did a lot better of going bigger and just trusting my serve. In the past I would just feel like I needed to get the serve in because I could rely on getting balls back and everything.

But I want to become a more aggressive server, and I feel like when my serve is on, I'm playing well. I think it was more of a mental switch. You know, just a slight change that we did, just helping me with the toss, being more consistent. I think mentally when I have the aggressive serving mindset that's when I play my best tennis.

It's not so much why my serve doesn't come off hard. It's more so why am I not going for it more. Yeah, I think I'm trying to go for it more. Yeah, hopefully I can continue to have that aggressive mindset. I think I play my best

tennis when I do.

Q. There has been a little bit of discussion about the scheduling and late starts and finishes, as we saw last night for Sabalenka. There has been some suggestion the women's game should start the night session. Any thoughts about that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I was watching Novak's match last night. I didn't know the player that he was playing. So I think the thought process was, you know, maybe usually he'll win his first round in pretty quick straight sets, so I think that's why they put Aryna after, thinking she would go on sooner. It ended up being like a three, I don't know, a three-hours-ish, maybe longer, match. I went to sleep before it was finished.

Yeah, usually I always would, if I'm going to play night, I always would like to play the first night match, because usually typically the women's, our longest match is three hours usually. And then the men's, it can go minimum three -- or minimum two. At least you know with three sets it's going to be at least two hours, and that's even fast. With an average match it's like three-and-a-half.

I know Australian Open has done a three-start thing to help with the night matches. It's like a tough thing because, yes, at night is probably our prime time and we can optimize viewers, but also we have to protect the players' health. It's like a fine line.

I personally, if I'm the women's match at night, I would love to play the first night match and not the second one. I would like to see that. But at the same time it's tough with also Novak being, you know, I don't know, he's won this more times than I can count. You know, putting him not on the prime slot, which is probably the 7:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. slot.

I get both sides of it. I'm going to always go for the players' side, but I also can understand the media and the marketing and optimizing the money side. So it's tough.

Q. You've often referenced on court and on Twitter about the importance of relationships with your family, your parents, brothers, grandparents. Wonder if you can talk about what those strong bonds mean to you as a person and a player. And also when you're over here, is it difficult to keep in touch with them because of the time difference?

COCO GAUFF: It is tough keeping in touch, especially with my brothers in general. Codey is 16. Sometimes he has a sister; sometimes he doesn't. Like, depends on when he wants me to exist because he's in his cool phase right now. The youngest one, he's 10. He doesn't want to talk for long. He's on the game or whatever.

Those relationships are, like, incredibly important to me, especially, you know, traveling a lot, being by yourself a lot. I'm lucky enough that I can have my parents come with me, and my family sometimes, but it just reminds me that I'm a person, reminds me that my value is more than how I do on the court.

I think when I always remind myself about those relationships I'm able to just play freer and know that I have people love me regardless of how I do.

Q. So does your brother leave you on read as well?

COCO GAUFF: Oh, yeah, Codey, he definitely does. Lately he's done better at responding because I told him, You never respond. Yeah, when he says, like, I love you, that's, like, a big thing in our house because he doesn't say it literally.

The only time, this year the only time I remember him saying it was right before we jumped off the Sky Tower. He said, If anything happens, I just want to say I love you guys. That was the first time he told me, told him that I loved him this year. It's been like, what, three weeks in the year.

Cameron, he's the youngest one. He says it all the time. He's more the empathetic, emotional one, and Codey is more of the chill. We know he loves us. We know he has an image he likes to have. I get it's important that he has to keep his cool image up, you know, on Instagram and in front of his friends. I get it. I was there at that age.

Q. You said that you stayed in your room yesterday the whole time after practice. Is that like a preference for you in general the day before a slam match, or do you mix it up?

COCO GAUFF: I mix it up. Yesterday I was going to go to dinner. Then I started watching the Novak match and it was good. I was, like, Well, might as well stay in here. Ordered room service and just played cards with my family.

Then there are other times where we do mini golf or something fun the night before. It's really just a feeling thing. Usually if I'm first on, I like to cut the night early. If I'm, like, at night, I try to actually stay up so I can prepare for the night session.

Q. Wondering if you could describe your experience from the first versus the second set? Because obviously, like, the first set you were dominant, but in the second one, you didn't drop a game. How did you approach the second set? Did you think to yourself, like, I'm going to crush it? What was your experience of it?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think the first set I was playing really passive, and I think -- I mean, I was nervous. I don't think. I know I was nervous. I feel like a lot of my shots that I'm confident in when you're nervous there is always a second-guessing feeling.

Finally I was able to, like, let go and just play free and put the ball deep. I think what changed in the second set, I was playing much deeper. She also made more errors, too. But I think I was just playing much deeper and much freer.

Yeah, I think I just freed up and everything started to fall in place.

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