

Australian Open

Sunday, 21 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/M. Frech

6-1, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Coco, well done. Into the quarterfinals. Talk us through your thoughts on the match and how you're feeling generally as we head into week two.

COCO GAUFF: First Aussie quarterfinal. Super happy to be in this position and be here. I think I had three fourth rounds. It's cool to get over that hump. Hopefully I can keep going for more.

THE MODERATOR: Who would like the first question?

Q. Can you explain the process, you started out so young, but the process of becoming the CEO of Team Coco, which I imagine you are at this point now that you're 19 years old, and how you sort of took ownership of it. I would imagine when you're 14, 15, your parents are playing a lot bigger role. How has that evolved each season?

COCO GAUFF: As each season goes, I've definitely been more vocal about what I want on and off the court. Yeah, at first, like 15, 16, my parents were doing a lot of it for me just so I could focus on tennis. Now moving into more of the role. I'm getting older, having to make more decisions, all of that, on and off court.

Yeah, I think for me, I know myself pretty well. I know what I need to do to succeed, not every single thing. That's why we have coaches and people that advise me. As a player, I think all the great players kind of know what they need to do and need help from others.

I think for me, I know what I need to do. It's just all about having the right team to guide me into that path on how I want to do it or how I want to train or how I want to, I don't know, work with certain brands, stuff like that.

It's definitely been a progress with each year. Adulthood is something I'm really enjoying learning. I'm not completely there, but every year I think I'm getting better and better at it.

Q. Was it pushback initially when you started to

assert yourself?

COCO GAUFF: Not really, no. My dad naturally - not protective, not even make decisions, but naturally he'll just be protective and be like, I can say no for you if you want me to. Or, I can always be the bad guy.

Whenever he needs to be the bad guy, he'll just be like, Blame it on me. He doesn't really care what people think about him. I always appreciate having, like, him by my side. Because me, I'm also in the position I probably can't be as assertive as him just because of me.

In general, I think he's just always been the one to do those decisions. Now he kind of stepped back in the role and just saying like, I'm here if you need me, but I'm not going to make decisions for you, but I can give you advice, all of that.

There's never been pushback. I think that's just how they always raised me, slowly letting me see the behind-the-scenes stuff and teaching me about it.

I have a lot to learn. I would say the end of last year was like the start of really doing more of myself off the court.

Q. '22 or '23?

COCO GAUFF: '23. Midseason probably.

Q. I wanted to ask you about your athletic ability. Has being a track athlete ever crossed your mind when you were younger? How much do you like training, the running, the aerobic stuff? Have you ever timed yourself across 100 meters or 50 meters?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I did do track and basketball. I really love track. I think I would have been a good 400 runner.

I've actually never really timed myself like just a straight, like, sprint. The only times I'm on the track is for cardio, and we're doing a lot of them. The time is not really the true time because we're like five, four, five or six 400s in.

I am curious. I do want to do that. Maybe I'll bring it up to my fitness coach and see if he can do a session just to see what my time would be.



I'm explosive. I don't think I would have been a good 100-meter runner. I've always done better long distance. I did 800 in middle school. I think 400 would have been, like, my race.

In this off-season we always try to include cross-training. I did some swimming, some running. I wanted to do boxing, but the timing would never work out with the instructor. I did do boxing before, last preseason. Not the last one but the one before.

Yeah, I think it just keeps it fun. My parents always never wanted me to specify in a sport, which is why when I was 13, I knew that I was going to play tennis, but they still put me in basketball and track. I ended up missing my All-Star game because I had to play the junior US Open. I made the finals of that tournament.

I always knew tennis was going to be my thing. Something about playing other sports teaches you how to use your muscles differently, teaches you the mindset. I always recommend parents and just kids to not put themselves in a box so early even though you know what your main sport is going to be. You'll be surprised how helpful other sports can be.

Another person that I know played another sport was Ben Shelton. He was a quarterback. His serve is unbelievable. My dad would, since I was eight years old, have me, like, throwing footballs. I think that just helps your movement and muscle memory.

Q. You've done so much in your career already. You've achieved so much. Do you ever forget that you're still just 19?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, honestly this morning I saw, like, a post, I think USTA posted. It was like three fourth rounds of US Open, first teenager. Sometimes I forget. I know I'm not going to be a teenager anymore, but I just feel like I've lived so many lives the last four years, that I just feel older than 19.

I remember like when I'm looking at the other girls on tour who are 16, and now coming up, 16, 17, like they just feel so young and I just feel so old. I know I'm not that old.

But, yeah, I definitely do forget my age a lot. Yeah, 100%.

Q. At the US Open you had kind of a rough road to the quarterfinals.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah.

Q. A lot different from here. Do you feel at all uncooked going into the quarterfinals? It must be different than it was four months ago.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I don't feel uncooked at all. I would love for every match to go pretty easy. I know that's not the case.

Yeah, US Open, every match I won was like pretty much a dogfight, it felt like. I think sometimes, I don't know if that's the ideal way to win a slam because you have to last, like, seven matches. I just think I had the physical ability and mental ability to do that.

Going into this, I've always had the goal of trying to do better at making the first couple rounds. Not easier, but closing them in straight sets, and not putting too much stress on the mind and the body.

I'm 19 now, but I'm not always going to be able to bounce back as quick physically or mentally probably years from now. I think it's just prepping myself. Everything I do has always been for the longevity of my career, making sure I can have a long career. I think the more I pay attention to maybe those 30-All points at 2-0, or like 40-30. Yeah, you're up a break, but still paying attention to that game, definitely makes it different in the matches.

US Open I did play higher-ranked people earlier. That's also another reason why I had so many long matches.

It doesn't feel different. I know when it comes to crunch time, if I have a long match the round before or not, I'll still compete the same and still feel just as sharp.

Q. What is your routine? You've been done so early here. What do you do all day?

COCO GAUFF: Sometimes after my match I'll hit again and go, like, to the indoors or something and hit. I didn't today. I did, like, a mini cardio session after my match. That's what I've been doing since I have been finishing earlier. Unfortunately Jess couldn't play doubles, so there's been no doubles for me. It's a different tournament for me I feel like.

Yeah, I've definitely been doing more off-match stuff than I normally do just to still stay sharp. That's what my body is used to, playing hour-and-a-half, two-hour matches. I have been practicing afterward.

After that, go to the movies. I don't know. Read a book or something. Like today does feel kind of early. When I finished my match, I'm already in press, it's only like 3:00. It's definitely a weird feeling, a little bit.

Q. You have actually been going to the movies?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I saw "Poor Things" last week. I'm going to try to go tonight. Yeah, luckily the movie theater is not too far. There's nothing else to do in my hotel room besides do that, so yeah.

