

Australian Open

Thursday, 25 January 2024

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Coco Gauff

Press Conference



A. SABALENKA/C. Gauff

7-6, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Coco, obviously a tough result tonight. Could you just give us your reflections on your tournament here at the Australian Open.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, tough match for me tonight. Overall a positive tournament. I had chances in both sets, but she played better tonight. I felt like I did my best with the game plan that I had. I think it just came down to a couple of points, and that's tennis.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What was the difference in her game tonight compared with the US Open? I know she attacked your second serve quite a lot.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, she served better. US Open -- I mean, she made less errors, but also, I feel like I played a little bit more aggressive this time. So, you know, US Open I felt like wasn't, like, a great match, like, for me. Yes, I won. I think I played better tonight.

I wish I could have made more first serves. I think that was the difference. She had a higher first-serve percentage, and it's tough to also go for the second when you double-faulted a couple times.

But I don't think that wasn't the fault, either. Because I put myself in the position, I cleaned up the first set, put myself in the position to serve out the set. At the end of the day, it came down to a couple of points. Same in the second. Maybe if I get that hold at 4-All, it's a different match.

Yeah, and a lot of positives to take. I felt like, like, today I didn't feel like I played bad. I just felt there were certain points that I just didn't win. Which I prefer this match over the last match that I played. So it's tough with the result, but I'm trying to look at the positives.

Q. I know all losses suck, but is it harder or easier or does it not make a difference when, as you said, you had your chances and it was just a couple of points versus either just getting blown away or something

like that?

COCO GAUFF: No, I mean, a loss is a loss. I mean, I'm not too, like, I had my chances, yes, but also I put myself in a good position because she had her chances to easily lose that first set too after being up 5-2 and serving for it.

Yeah, I think, I mean, at this stage, in any tournament, but especially a Grand Slam, whether I lost 1 and 1 or like I did today or in a third-set tiebreaker, I still think it would hurt just as much. I am disappointed, because I did feel good going out on the court. But, you know, at the end of the day she was the better player. She played those points better. Yeah, I feel like I have a lot to improve.

Q. Obviously returning second serve and attacking that is a big part of her game. She does that against everyone, not just you. Can you just talk about what it's like, when you miss first serve, knowing she's at the other end, one of the best in the world, trying to block all that out and focusing on your ball toss and what you're trying to do? Is that ever a real challenge with her?

COCO GAUFF: Yes and no. Like, I've played her so many times so it's just a part of it. Sometimes she's gonna miss and sometimes she's going to make winners. Today she was hitting winners.

On my second serve, I kind of found it more in the second set trying to place it better. I feel like if I would have placed it better, because I don't think it's a speed thing. Whether it's faster or not, you know she's stepping in regardless. I think that the placement, I was just hitting it right to her forehand, and so she knew where it was going every single time.

So I think I want to work on that in the future.

Q. Can her grunt ever be distracting? Sometimes it was still going on when you hit the ball.

COCO GAUFF: No. I mean, I played her a lot, so I can't sit here and say that the grunt is distracting. I don't even know, it's like the fifth time we have played.

No, I don't think so. I don't notice, you know, when -- I feel like at least with her it's consistent, so it doesn't



bother me. I mean, I've played a player in the past where the grunt wasn't consistent where they would grunt longer on purpose on 30-All or deuce point. If it's consistent, I can't really say anything about it.

I don't think you're supposed to grunt while the person is hitting. Like I said, I didn't notice it. When you playing her, you know that's what she's going to do. I don't think it's a tactic or anything. I think that's just how she plays tennis.

Yeah, I mean, it didn't bother me. I mean, I don't get how it can bother someone. But yeah, it doesn't bother me because it's consistent. If she did it extended on certain balls, then I would be like, Okay, it's ridiculous. No, I think that's just her. It's fine. There has been other grunTERS in the past. It doesn't bother me.

Q. This has been your first slam in a while I think not playing doubles. I know you had intended to play doubles, but I just wondered how different that has felt for you in terms of the rhythm and routines in terms of the tournament. Have you missed it much?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, yeah, a little bit. No, I feel like in the future doubles won't always be a thing at slams, like, every slam. I don't want to completely shut it out, but yeah, it was a little different.

But also, like, there's been times we played and lost first round. I guess I just took it like that. It was weird having a lot of time.

But also, I think it kind of, it was, like, a weapon in disguise because I did play first on a lot of the days here. Just because of the TV, I'm sure that they were trying to get me to cater to the Americans.

Yeah, that I think probably helped me more. But yeah, I never want to default. I mean, Jess wasn't feeling that great, but it was a weird dynamic, for sure, not playing one match. I remember, like, my first round, I think I just wanted to work on returns and then when we didn't play doubles, I was, like, well, I guess I have to go to the practice. It was weird just having so much time on the off days.

I kind of like both dynamics right now. It was nice to just take a day, because I do take doubles seriously. It was nice to take a day to be away from, like, competing, but also at the same time I love competing.

In the future, I don't know. I think I still want to play doubles but I probably just won't do it at every slam. I will probably select which ones I feel like I need it.

Q. I believe this is your last major as a teenager. You have obviously won a slam in that time. How do you reflect on your time in slams as a teenager? Are

you satisfied with how far you've gone in majors in that span?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I tend to be hard on myself, so I feel like today I was, like, dang, but I think looking back of, like, overall this stage of my life, like, it was obviously a successful time.

I saw a stat that I think I'm up there with Serena and Capriati with the wins at slams. I saw that and it made me feel -- I don't know, I just feel like I look at the glass half empty, so I'm negative. Then I looked at that stat and I'm like they had great careers. So I'm like I'm in the right direction. I just have to remind myself of the journey and not so much of the moment.

I am really proud of myself. I did want to win a slam as a teenager, and I did that. Obviously today I was hoping to get No. 2, or at least give myself a chance to get No. 2. It didn't happen, but I feel like I'm there, yeah. So hopefully I can go only upwards from here.

Q. On this being your first night-session match, did that take much adjusting to? Would it have been ideal to have played a night-session match before the semifinals?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, yes and no. Obviously you want to get a chance to play at night. But at the same time, I mean, I was going to have to play my first night match eventually, whether that was second round or in the semis.

I practiced last night at night. I have a lot of experience at night. So I don't think it affected the game too much today. Yeah, I know how to play at night, and yeah, I don't think it affected the result today.

Q. Are you still having fun? Following the gentleman's question, you're still so young, this is a long-term career. Are you still having fun?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I am having fun. I feel like if I ever get to a moment where I stop having fun, I would take a break. Yeah, I am.

There was, like, a couple points in the match where I, like, I'm always having fun generally but you're so competitive, but there was a couple of shots where I was just, like, this is fun, this atmosphere is fun, and I want to enjoy it as long as possible.

Yeah, I think for me the most important thing is to continue that, having fun. Even though tonight I lost, it was still a great competitive match. You know, I watched these matches growing up and, like, watching Serena and watching Sharapova lose, like, these matches. It seems like when you're in it, it feels like the end of the world. But then when you look at history, they didn't let

one match define their career.

I'm not going to let this match -- I'm going to dwell on it tonight, but as Brad told me as soon as the match was over, the sun is going to rise tomorrow and you have a new chance to live a good day.

Tomorrow, I don't know, I'm going to try to go to the movies or something, be proud of myself.

Q. We don't know who Aryna is going to play in the final, but you're the person who's gotten closest to beating her this week. No one else has taken her to a tiebreak. What's it going to take to stop her on Saturday, do you think?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, I don't know. I feel like for me today was just I was close and I was just taking care of those points. I think you just need to take care of those points.

I mean, anything can happen in a Grand Slam final. I do think from experience the other two girls playing their first final, it's going to be a different feeling. I just feel like my first final I was just so nervous.

I think to win against her, you just need to treat it like any other match and not put so much weight on it. Luckily the other two girls are both, like, pretty early in their careers, 23, and I think Qinwen is 20, if I'm not mistaken?

THE MODERATOR: 21.

COCO GAUFF: 21? 20? Okay.

Yeah, I think they just have to get over their nerves. I don't think Aryna is going to go in there nervous. She didn't play like it today.

Yeah, just get over your nerves. I don't know the game plan. I do know a game plan, but I'm not going to say it because it didn't work today. (Laughter.)

FastScripts by ASAP Sports