

Roland Garros

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Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/E. Mertens

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THE MODERATOR: Through to your second Grand Slam quarterfinal. Both have come here at Roland Garros. What is it about Paris that seems to get you playing so well here?

COCO GAUFF: I don't know. I really enjoy clay and the crowd. And I think today, I don't know, I feel like every match I'm getting better. I think today even though I had some tough moments I was able to tough it out. I really do feel like I'm progressing with each match.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. You are building quite a clay court résumé. Is it like instant confidence for you when you step on the clay and particularly when you step on it here?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, for sure. I definitely feel confident on the court. I feel like it really suits my game. Yeah, and I feel like, you know, the previous tournaments this clay season I had some good wins but it wasn't really any outstanding results.

I feel like it gave me a lot to learn from, and I think I'm taking those tough matches that I lost this season and really learning from them and I guess showing that I'm doing better.

Q. Wondering about your forehand and how that shot has developed. You have a lot of variety on it in terms of the slice, the dropshot, heavy topspin. How have those different shots developed in your forehand?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think my forehand has gotten a lot better throughout my career. I think that's probably for sure the side that I have the most variety on. I can play pretty much every shot. I mean, on my backhand, you know, I do the same, I slice and dropshot on my backhand, but for sure on my forehand side from anywhere in the court I feel like I have the opportunity to hit any type of shot.

Q. We mentioned earlier this week that you have just



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graduated from high school. Here at Roland Garros we have just reached midterm. So what is your midterm report and how you are playing so far? Could you grade yourself? Will you be doing any homework before the next round? Finally, what will it take for you to go to top of the class?

COCO GAUFF: I like that question (smiling). I appreciate the effort into that. (Laughter.) I thought it was pretty clever.

But, no, I guess grading myself, I mean, As all around, to be honest. You're never going to play your best tennis in a slam every moment of the match, but I think I'm getting better and better, and I think mentally I can't ask for much more from myself in each match.

I mean, you know, today in the first set I had a lot of points that I probably should have closed out, and made some errors on balls that I probably shouldn't have. I just stayed in it. I didn't not trust myself because I started to make those shots in the second set.

To make it to the top of the class, I think just keep doing what I'm doing and not freaking out in those moments. I think that was the biggest lesson I learned last year in my quarterfinal match, I had a couple set points and I think I freaked out when some of those points didn't go my way.

Today I didn't freak out when a couple of those important points didn't go my way.

Q. Obviously doing high school while being a pro tennis player means you didn't have the most normal high school experience. One of the least normal things that happened is you got a congratulation note from Michelle Obama on graduating. How did that feel to get that? I know you have met her before but was that a surprise to hear from her?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, for sure surprised. I wasn't expecting that at all. Since when we met her I haven't really talked to her or anything since. I'm super thankful for that message. It was after my doubles match and I saw a mention from your story, Michelle Obama. I was like, Oh, what did I do?

I think what really meant a lot, it wasn't about the tennis, it was about my education. So I think that meant more to me the fact that she posted about that.

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Q. I just wondered how conscious or aware you have been about how your section of the draw has developed over the last few rounds. From the outside it's looked like some of the matches have felt kind of extra loaded just because of how much opportunity there has been in various sections of the women's draw. Is that something you have been aware of?

COCO GAUFF: Yes and no. I mean, I know that some of the higher seeds on my side definitely dropped out of the draw. But also, at the same time, I think, you know, the opportunity, I feel like it depends how you look at it. For me I look at it in a way every day, no matter who you play, you have the chance to win the match no matter their ranking or their seed or anything.

Yes, there is opportunity but I think that's with every match, both players have a 50/50 chance of winning that match obviously when the match starts, then the chances go more and more to one person's way than the other.

I think that's the best way to look at it, because you don't want to say, Oh, this player lost so maybe I have a chance. I think you're kind of shortcoming yourself because you should be able to think that you should be able to beat that player.

I think going into this tournament I obviously noticed that some of the players that were higher seed dropped out, but I think whereas last year I feel like I was thinking like if I could have got through that quarterfinal maybe I could have won the tournament because I saw the other side was opening up, and this time coming in I'm not thinking about it like that.

I'm thinking, especially if US Open taught us anything, anybody can win on any day. I think all players should really going into the match thinking about that.

Q. I saw Courtney from WTA Insider tweeting she had never seen you so relaxed at a slam. Is that true? If so, why is that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think I definitely think that's true. I don't know. My parents told me the same thing. I don't know why. I think just from having those tough losses in the past and I made the second week a lot of times. I really am just enjoying the tournament, enjoying life. I'm not thinking about, you know, the end result. I'm just enjoying the match ahead of me and whatever happens happens, it's out of my control. I'm going to give it my best either way.

Q. If it doesn't happen to be Sloane again in the next round, anything you can take away from last time you faced her at the US Open?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think last time I played her I was

super nervous going into the match. Not because it was Sloane. Just because we were on Ashe and it was all-American matchup. I think a lot of people expected a lot from me in that match.

Yeah, going in, if I do play her, just going to approach it like any other match. Yeah, obviously I have to go back and watch that match and see what I can learn from it.

But, yeah, I'm just enjoying the moment right now.

Q. You have known Sloane from a very young age. How much did it change sort of how you see her or having faced her across the net at a Grand Slam like you didn't get any experience of her sort of at her toughest in that moment?

COCO GAUFF: I think growing up knowing her, I knew we were going to play each other eventually. I mean, yes, I was young, I had a very competitive mindset since I was a little girl. Yes, I looked up to her and all that, but I knew that I was going to be playing against her is quite different from the Williams sisters. I didn't think I would play against them. I thought their careers would be done by the time I came. So I knew I would always play against Sloane.

If I do play against her the second time hopefully this time it goes my way.

Q. You mentioned last year's US Open sort of showing that anybody can do anything. I'm wondering, do you feel that idea that you were talking about in that same answer about anyone can beat anyone and it's sort of anyone's guess what's going to happen, is that more pronounced, or is there a stronger sense of that here at the French Open and on clay than maybe in general?

COCO GAUFF: No, I feel like it's the same, you know, every tournament. For sure on clay, yeah, I feel a lot of confidence. You know, I feel the clay really well. But, yeah, I think, I really do think anything can happen. We do have our strong contenders in the tournament. Some people consider me one of them.

But, yeah, I think going in, I don't think about other people's opinions on what's gonna happen in the draw or other players' opinions or what's gonna happen. Because I really truly believe that anybody can win no matter what. And not even just US Open but previous tournaments, you know, where people thought bigger players will win and those younger, smaller younger players, lower-ranked players came out on top.

I think really we just, you know, have to take a step back, especially in the Grand Slams, and take a step back and not look at rankings anymore, because I think anybody can win. I think in Grand Slams that really comes out the

most than any other tournament.

Q. Teichmann, if you play her, you have played her a few times, she loves clay like you do. Your thoughts on that. Do you see a day down the road where you won't play doubles in majors, kind of like other great players in the past have made that choice?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, going against, if I were to play Jil, I played her three times; won twice, lost once. I know it's going to be a tough match. I practiced with her a couple times. We always have good practice matches, which is why I love practicing with her, because you're going to get great practice before the tournament. As a person she's super nice too.

I know that whoever I play in the next round it's going to be a tough match. And doubles, I mean, I don't know. I mean, for sure I feel there is going to be a point in my career I'm going to want to focus more on singles but I don't think that will be any time soon. I think if I were to make that decision, it wouldn't be anything, it would be solely because of maybe I physically can't handle it anymore. It won't be because of, oh, I think I need to focus on singles to do better.

I think doubles has helped me as a player and helped me in those pressure moments more than anything, more than any practice that I could get. So I don't think, it won't be -- it won't be till a long time that I decide not to play doubles.

Obviously there is going to be some tournaments, maybe not slams, but maybe smaller tournaments where I say, Okay, this week I'm just going to focus on singles. I think for sure in the slams I'm going to try to play doubles as much as possible.

Q. I just wanted to pick up again on what you were saying about US Open last year, how much of a shift that might have caused in your mindset and maybe sort of the general feel in the locker room. You seem to be somebody that's always had the self-belief, but maybe other players sort of now feel like anything is possible. Is it really kind of planted that seed in people's minds?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think for me, yeah, always believed that I could go far, but I think for other players I think so as well.

In this tournament, I mean, both sides of the draw, with the exception of Iga, there is a lot of lower-seeded and lower-ranked players still left in the tournament. So I really think that players believe that. Others players believe that. I think a lot of it stems from that tournament.

Q. You signed the camera, Rooting for the Heat in 7.

How are you following them while you are here? Secondly, why do you want them to win in 7 when they're gonna get rolled by the Warriors?

COCO GAUFF: I haven't watched actually any games, because the games have been way too early or late, I don't know what you want to even call it. I wake up in the morning and watch the score.

But regarding that, I feel like, really, I do believe we are going to win, and I think whoever -- I hope, not even going to put that possibility out there, but I think whoever wins this game is going to win the championship.

I love the Warriors. I really do. I think Steph Curry and that team is really one of the best teams we are ever going to see. I think we are better. I think it's just about the culture we have.

Q. You have mentioned Michelle Obama and the Williams sisters there. You are still young, so you have got role models and people you respect and admire. But you are also a role model to lots of people, as well. So how does that feel versus having your own role models and you are a role model to the people as well?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, for me I think it's crazy, really. I was thinking about that the other day. I signed in Madrid and here I signed, like, took a picture with some girls and they were freaking out after I left. I went down the stairs. I could still hear them screaming about it, and I was like that's so crazy to me.

I kind of teared up, because the fact that people feel about me in that way. I always try to tell people -- sometimes people say, I'm nervous to come up to you, or I saw you, and I get DMs sometimes, I was scared to say hi.

I'm just a person as well as you are a person, and I'm going to treat you the same. So I think for me being a role model for some people is crazy, and I'm super grateful and it's something I will never take for granted. I will try to put forth my best effort with how I act on the court and how I act off the court.

Obviously I'm going to make some mistakes and have some bad moments, but I think for me as long as I show that I'm, you know, it's with good intent, like last year I broke a racquet here, and people ask did I regret it? No, I don't regret it.

I think it's important as a young player that we show vulnerability and show that it's okay to make mistakes, and as long as you learn from them, and obviously breaking a racquet and not hitting an umpire or anything like that, there is a certain extent to that, but just little stuff like that, I think it's just important to show with that.

For having my role models I guess recognize me is something that I never imagined when I was younger.

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