

Roland Garros

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Paris, France

Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/M. Trevisan

6-3, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Can you start by giving us some thoughts on today's match.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, today I think I played probably the best I could. Today in the moment, you know, I think we were both kind of shaky in the first couple games, had a lot of early unforced errors, but after that, it was smooth sailing from there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. I want to ask you one very quick, easy, frivolous question, and then a slightly more serious one. The first question is: Can you tell us what you're listening to when you walk out on court in your earbuds?

COCO GAUFF: I'm listening to a playlist called Rap, and I can't say the next word, but it's a playlist of a bunch of like hard-core rap songs that I put together that get me hyped for the match. I don't remember what song I was listening to when you walked on the court, though.

Q. What happened at the end of the match when you walked over to the TV camera and wrote that message there? Wondering why you did that. How is it for you important to speak your mind about various issues that have nothing to do with tennis?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, for me, it's important, just as a person in the world, regardless of tennis player or not. I think for me it was just especially important just being in Europe and, you know, being where I know people globally around the world are for sure watching.

I think that this is a problem, you know, in other parts of the world, but especially in America it's a problem that's, frankly, been happening over some years but obviously now it's getting more attention. But for me it's been an issue for years.

For me, it's kind of close to home. I had some friends that were a part of the Parkland shooting back in -- I don't remember which year. I remember watching that whole



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experience like pretty much firsthand, seeing and having friends go through that whole experience. Luckily they were able to make it out of it. I just think it's crazy, I think I was maybe 14 or 13 when that happened, and still nothing has changed.

I think that was just a message for the people back at home to watch and for people who are all around the world to watch. You know, I know that, you know, it's not -- hopefully it gets into the heads of people in office to hopefully change things.

Q. Picking up on that a little bit, did you go onto court today with that planned, to write that message on the camera, in the event that you did win?

COCO GAUFF: No. I really didn't know what I was going to write even moments walking to the camera, and it just felt right in that moment and to write that. I woke up this morning, you know, and I saw there was another shooting, and I think it's just, you know, crazy.

I know that it's getting more attention now. But like I said in the previous question, like, this has been an issue, at least in my head, for a long time, and I definitely think there needs to be some reform put into place.

I think now especially being 18 I've really been trying to educate myself around certain situations, because now I have the right to vote and, you know, I want to use that wisely.

Q. Finally on that, do you receive any pressure not to speak out about these political issues that matter from you? Do you have to resist any of that in order to speak about what matters?

COCO GAUFF: No. I mean, my team around me knows that if I want to say something, I'm going to say it. But particularly if I do say something, most of the time I put a lot of thought into what I'm going to say and how I'm going to say it.

So, I mean, if anything, my team and my parents encourage me to write that. Since I was younger -- I know I said this before -- that my dad told me I could change the world with my racquet. He didn't mean that by like just playing tennis. He meant speaking out on issues like this. The first thing my dad said to me after I got off court, I'm proud of you and I love what you wrote on the camera.

I think my parents support me when talking about issues like this.

Q. You have talked quite a bit about having perspective on tennis and, you know, it's not everything. I'm wondering how you came to that conclusion and using it in your own kind of career, given that it can obviously be very easy for players to see tennis as their world.

COCO GAUFF: I think really like it's given me that perspective is just paying attention to the people around me, and I feel like I put myself in a bubble to the point where it was like tennis, tennis, tennis, tennis.

And I realize, really talking to my family in general, my grandmother, she's always like, There's more to life than this. You just need to relax when you're out there. I always brushed it over, like, You can't relax in these situations.

Now I look at it, I'm like, You're right, I can relax in these situations. It's just a tennis match. It's not the end of the world. There's so many people going through so many like uncomfortable situations. For me to be -- I mean, obviously being nervous is natural -- but for me to think that winning a tennis match or losing a tennis match is the end of the world, I think just kind of shows what kind of privilege I have.

So I think for me, I just took a step back and said, You know, this is just a tennis match. Whatever happens, it happens. I think that's probably helped me being in that mindset.

Q. You're 18, but I was curious, do you feel like a veteran pro at this point? Could you talk a little bit about what it means to make it to your first final in a Grand Slam in singles at this stage of your life?

COCO GAUFF: I don't think I consider myself a veteran. I mean, I do when I step on the court, I think I do know, like, I feel like I've learned sooner how to handle myself in certain situations than other players have.

But, yeah, I think I'm still learning day in and day out. I don't know. I think I won't consider myself a veteran until a while from now.

Q. And about your first final...

COCO GAUFF: Oh, sorry, that part (smiling).

Yeah, definitely means a lot. I'm so happy, and definitely -- I wasn't expecting it. I'm going to be honest. This year I hadn't had the best results going into this. So it wasn't expected at all, really.

Q. Martina before said that normally she's much louder than today. So I'd like to know if you were so surprised about her screaming at the beginning that you had to go to the umpire? And if you had heard in the past Azarenka, who is probably even louder sometimes? And you haven't met Seles, who was even louder. So what do you think about it?

COCO GAUFF: Oh, for me, it wasn't like the volume of -- she didn't do it really after that. It was honestly those two points when I was -- while she was grunting, I'm sure if you watched video -- while she was grunting, I was still hitting the ball. It wasn't so much the volume of it. It was more so the length of the grunt.

I just wasn't used to, and I asked the ref, I didn't complain first, first I asked, Is that allowed? Because I didn't know the rules regarding if she was allowed to grunt, and she told me no, she was going to talk to her later about it.

It wasn't the volume. It was just more so, like I remember hitting the backhand and I could still hear her grunting.

No, I love Martina. You know, when we're on the court, I mean, there's stuff like that you're going to talk about. But as you all saw at the end, we hugged each other. So, yeah, I have no problem with her.

Q. Back to the camera message, when you talk about wanting to make noise with not just the actual hitting the ball part of your racquet, are there other athletes you look to as role models for this? Whether it's Billie Jean King, who was in the stands today, Naomi Osaka or Colin Kaepernick, or whoever it may be, who you see as a role model, a template for what you want to try to do?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, definitely I would say LeBron James, Serena, Billie Jean, Colin, the list goes on, Naomi, it goes on really about those issues.

I think now athletes are more, I feel like more fine with speaking out about stuff like this. I feel like a lot of times we're put in a box that people always say, Oh, sports and politics should stay separate and all this. And I say yes, but also at the same time I'm a human first before I'm a tennis player. If I'm interested in this, I wouldn't even consider gun violence politics; I think that's just life in general. I don't think that's political at all.

But just in general, I think that I'm a human first. So of course I'm going to care about these issues and speak out about these issues.

When people make those comments, I'm not going to be an athlete forever. There is going to be a time when I retire and all this, and I'm still going to be a human. So of course I care about these topics.

Yeah, I think if anything, sports gives you the platform to maybe make that message reach more people.

Q. Tennis of course before your time had seen a good number of cautionary tales of girls 14, 15 have enormous success, a lot of expectations. Their careers didn't necessarily pan out. My question is: In your case, what do you feel are some of the key factors that since your breakthrough here at 14, just in four years, have kept your development, both as a player and a person, a young woman, on track? We have seen this systematic growth and blossoming in you.

COCO GAUFF: I think that all has to go to the people I have surrounded around me. I think that my parents and in general my family in general have done an amazing job of supporting me through wins and losses.

I would say I'm definitely my harshest critic when it comes to that. I think really it's about who you surround yourself with. I mean, I don't know for other player situations, but I'm lucky for me in my team and my family that they never put results as the only thing that mattered. If anything, you know, it's like how I act on the court and/or act off the court.

You know, one instance, I remember after I lost in the quarterfinals, I broke a racquet, and my dad was not happy about it (smiling). He wasn't even mad that I lost. He was mad about that factor.

But for me, it was an eye opener that my parents really just care about the character of my personality and not so much on tennis results.

Q. Your next opponent is the dominant force in women's tennis. She hasn't lost in 34 matches. Can you talk about the challenge of facing the World No. 1. Secondly, how do you think your life is going to change if you lift that trophy on Saturday?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, playing Iga, I mean, she's on a streak right now obviously, and I think going in I have nothing to lose and she's definitely the favorite going into the match on paper.

But I think that going in, I'm just going to play free and play my best tennis. I think in a Grand Slam final anything can happen.

If I do lift the trophy, honestly, I don't think my life is going to change really. I mean, I know it sounds kind of bad to say that, but the people who love me are still going to love me regardless if I lift the trophy or not. I mean, obviously if I do, it will probably be more attention from the people around the world. But in general in that aspect, I'm not worried about how my life is going to change, because I really don't think it's going to change

(smiling).

Q. It might.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, maybe (smiling).

Q. You're just at the start of your career with hopefully lots more success and opportunities to come. In Great Britain we are celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee this weekend. Would you like to meet the queen?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, yeah, who would say no to meeting the queen? Oh, my gosh. Yeah, I mean, I'm not really informed on British traditions and everything. I don't think that would ever happen, but if I did have the opportunity to meet the queen, that would be pretty cool.

Yeah, I mean, I don't know. She's been a queen forever. Like, in the U.S., you know, the presidents, they change and all that. So meeting somebody that's been in that platform I think for that long would definitely be a change of perspective in my head. Because, you know, growing up as a girl, you always want to be the princess, but meeting a real queen, that would be pretty cool.

Q. You are still obviously such a young person, but you said the other day, "Dream big." Years from now can you imagine doing things beyond the tennis court, and if so, can you imagine what some of your dreams and possibilities are beyond the court?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I definitely imagine myself doing stuff outside of tennis. Honestly I don't know what yet. I mean, there is definitely stuff that I'm passionate about but I haven't really given it too much thought. But I definitely, I don't know whether to get into fashion or makeup or anything, really.

I think that's something that I've been thinking about. But, you know, at 18 I feel like I don't know what I'm really passionate about yet, because tennis has been, you know, what I have been passionate about. But there is things that I slightly like but I don't know if I'm passionate enough to do anything with it in the future.

Q. You touched on playing Iga a moment ago, but what do you feel you have got to do specifically in the final?

COCO GAUFF: I think definitely capitalize on the opportunities I'm given. She's not going to give you much opportunities. Watching her play, I think she does a great job of like changing direction and like hitting angles off the court, and I think -- and hitting winners, she's always hitting winners.

But I think going into the match I'm going to try to be aggressive at the right moments and patient at the right

moments. I played her in Miami, and I think sometimes I made some unforced errors in some unnecessary times. I think I'm going to focus on trying not to do that as much.

Q. A couple years ago, I don't know if it was two years ago or last year, you were saying you were ready to win a slam even then. Now having gone through the experiences you have had over the last year or two, when you look back on that person, was that version of Coco ready to win a slam? How different is she from the one that's a match away?

COCO GAUFF: I think yes and no. I think that version was ready to win a slam, but I think she almost wanted it too much, that she put way too much pressure on herself.

Now I'm definitely ready to win one but I'm not putting pressure on myself to win one. I think there's a fine line between believing in yourself and almost pushing yourself too much.

I think at that moment I was pushing myself too much to do the results, whereas when I was in the quarterfinal, like, I didn't even like enjoy the moment. I didn't even care really.

Now, being in the final, like I'm enjoying it. I think there is definitely a difference between ready and almost wanting it too much. I think at that moment I wanted it too much, whereas now I definitely want it. Yes, who wouldn't? But also, it's not going to be the end of the world if it doesn't happen for me.

Q. You won the junior title here in 2018 and Iga then won Wimbledon right after. What do you remember about Iga from juniors and the first time you kind of were aware of her?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I knew her from juniors, but, I mean, we never spoke really until we both got on tour. I remember here specifically I was actually preparing to play her kind of in the final, and then she had a match point against my -- well, not my doubles partner this tournament, but normally Caty McNally, and Caty saved a match point against her and I ended up playing Caty in the final.

Yeah, and I just remember like that from the juniors. Obviously going on the tour, we spoke and, you know, she's super nice. I think that's something I really admire about her. I have known Iga -- I don't know her well-well, but I have known her since she was probably ranked lower, and now that she's No. 1, and I will say that, nothing has really changed other than her tennis. But behind the scenes, she's as nice as I think you guys see in the press conferences. I think that's really important and rare to see, so I definitely congratulate her on that aspect.

I think that for me, this final, I mean, I want it for myself, but I think I'm really happy to play her specifically, because, you know, I always wanted to play her in a final, and I knew it was going to happen eventually just from, even in juniors that it was going to happen, just from the way our games were both projecting. I just didn't think it would happen so soon.

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