

Roland Garros

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Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/R. Masarova

3-6, 6-1, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Coco, your first match here. Just talk us through your thoughts on how that went and also how you came back so well in that match today.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I played her before in Auckland final. I knew she would be better on clay. First-round nerves are always there.

The first set, I had like a couple bad games but one on the service game and a lot of breakpoint opportunities. I knew if I stayed with my plan I would be able to turn the match around.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Congrats on your win and also the Miami Heat. What was your reaction when you woke up this morning? Did you watch at all? And will you tell us the story about Jimmy Butler now?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I will, now that we're in the finals. Yeah, I did not watch, 2:30 a.m. is a tough time zone, especially playing the next day. First thing I did this morning was look at the results. Very relieved. I kind of held my breath.

The Jimmy Butler story. This was before we were in the playoffs, the Heat were in the playoffs, he offered me tickets to see the last home game of the season. Then he DM'd me a couple weeks later, asking if I wanted more tickets to see the postseason. I said, I won't be here. I'll be in Madrid and then Rome and then France.

And then he said, Okay, when we make the finals, let me know if your family wants some tickets.

So this was before we were even in the playoffs. This is before we lost to the Hawks for the first play-in game. I just felt like I knew that -- everybody is like we have a 3% chance of making the finals, but when he sent me that, I knew we were making the finals because he didn't say "if we make the finals," he said "when we make the finals." Now that we are in the finals I can say that story.



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But I remember screenshotting it and sending it to my family and I was, like, Oh, we're going, we're going to the finals.

So that's my Jimmy Butler story. He pretty much said we were going to the finals before we even qualified for the playoffs, and I just really like that mentality of him. So that's the story (smiling).

Q. On mentality, you said on court afterwards it was sort of bleep last year's final and bleep the first set. Can you talk through that mentality and expand on what you meant by that? Is that sort of your outlook here?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, people, you guys, ask me questions did the finals make me feel more pressure. At first I was like, I have to like match last year's result, blah, blah, blah, or do better. That was last year. I'm like, it's over, what can I do about it?

Then with the first set, it's over, like what can I do about it? You have the choice to dwell on it or reset, and I chose to reset.

Yeah, I mean, to be honest, in any circumstances I think you learn from your matches, and once you're done from learning from that match, there's no point of revisiting it. So for me I felt like there's no point in me revisiting last year. It's in the past. It was a great tournament, but I'm looking forward for more this week.

Q. I'm doing sort of a cross-tour comparison on two of the best dropshots out there. One is Ons Jabeur and the other is Carlitos. I know you can talk a little bit about Ons, and if you could, that would be great, and if you can give me some thoughts on Carlos, which I'm sure you've been able to watch a bit.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, Ons' dropshot, obviously I think on the women's side is probably the best. She can pretty much hit it from any side of the court. I'm going to be honest, the last time I played her she didn't use it as much. I do feel like I'm probably the worst player to dropshot (smiling).

So, yeah, and she definitely hits the most dropshot winners on me than on any other players. So she obviously has the best dropshot in the game.

Carlos Alcaraz, I never can read it. Obviously I'm not on



the court with him playing, so I don't know if I would be able to read it better if I was actually playing, but from the TV, yeah, I don't see it coming.

Ons, I really don't see it coming either. Most of the time it's just a reaction, and I'm just happy to be fast enough to get to them sometimes and sometimes it's just too good.

I think the difference is, I feel like Alcaraz, you know, I don't know, I just feel like both of them, I feel like Alcaraz is a little bit more aggressive and he does a little bit more serve and volley and moving forward, whereas I feel like Ons, I think she can dropshot from anywhere on the court. I feel like most of her dropshots or most of them obviously are moving forward, but I feel like a lot of them can come from behind the baseline, which I don't think Carlos does it as much.

I think he's doing it more when he's on the offense, but Ons does it on the defense sometimes. So I think that's probably the main difference between the two.

Q. Further to that question about your mentality, I noticed in the third set you drilled a ball pretty much straight at your opponent and didn't apologize afterwards. I'm wondering if that's kind of related to you trying to adopt a sort of more ruthless mentality this year.

COCO GAUFF: No. I mean, to be honest, she hit a bad ball and she chose to charge the net after the ball and took away the angle that I had. Normally I would have gone cross but she closed that angle so I just had no choice but to hit at her.

I didn't hit her with the ball, which is why I didn't say sorry. If I had hit her with the ball, I would have said sorry. But to be honest, I didn't feel the need to apologize considering she chose to charge the net after she knew she hit a bad ball.

Q. Can you talk to us a little bit about the next match and how do you feel on this surface, on clay? Everybody seems to say it's like velvet, it's the best courts in the world.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, definitely Roland Garros has the best clay. I always play good tennis here. I feel comfortable here.

As far as the next match, I haven't thought that far ahead so I can't really give you much about that. But I guess doing something similar and what I had in the last two sets. But yeah, I haven't thought about the next match yet.

Q. I wanted to ask you about two things. One was at the very start you talked about opening-round

nerves. Is that something you deal with at every tournament in the first round? Is it more particularly powerful at a Grand Slam tournament? Given all of your experience and triumphs that you have had so far in your career, why is it that there are those first-round nerves still?

COCO GAUFF: Definitely only -- sometimes in first rounds at other tournaments, but I would say the most in the slams.

I think it's really that feeling when you just step out on the court at a Grand Slam, it's a new feeling every year. I don't know if I'll ever get used to it. I feel very privileged to play on Suzanne Lenglen and on that court so when you step out there's a bit of nerves in it.

I do think once I get over that hurdle, I feel like the tournament becomes a lot easier for me. But it's just that new feeling of stepping out on that court.

I feel like it is mainly for me for the slams because growing up I didn't watch a lot of tennis, to be honest, but I watched the slams. So I feel like it's just the familiarity to it and it's like, Oh, I'm here.

Even though this is my fourth Roland Garros I think now, I don't think -- I mean, maybe 10 years from now I don't know if I'll be nervous or not but I feel like there's something about stepping especially on these big courts and just feeling really honored to be there.

Q. Wondering with those breakpoints as they are accumulating in the first set and they are getting away from you, what's the feeling like on that? Is it driving you a little crazy, like, Come on, I've got to get one of these? If you could explain a little bit about what the mindset is as those keep coming and going. And then once you did get the first one, kind of seemed to free you up and you got a whole bunch after that that you converted.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think in the first, for sure, I was like, Can I just get one of these? Then after that I was just like, the can I just get one is not working.

There is a couple times on the breakpoints I feel like she had good shots, she had a good backhand down the line and she had a second serve that hit the line, it was a good second serve. I had other chances obviously to win a lot of those points.

Then I think it gave me a lot of confidence going into the second set, because I knew the level of my game, if I can play it, that if I kept giving myself break opportunities it was going to happen. I pretty much had breakpoints almost every game I think besides two or three. That's pretty good against a server like her.

Honestly, the first set, yeah, I was frustrated with how many break opportunities I had but in the second set in the changeover I literally told myself, I know I can break her, I'm giving myself all the opportunities, I just need to commit, and that's what I did.

Q. I watched a video recently when you were helping to design your New Balance kit and your trainers, and you said it was inspired by the superhero vibe. I wanted to ask you which superheroes inspire you, if you could have one superhero power on the court, what would it be and why? And finally, what would you like to say to all your fans who think that you're their superhero?

COCO GAUFF: That's the best question ever. So thank you for that.

My favorite superhero is definitely Spider-Man. Love him. Love Black Panther. Then The Flash and Storm. There's a lot.

Yeah, I think when I'm on the court, you know, the superpowers aren't in real life, but I've got a good serve, got a good backhand, pretty fast. There's a little of my superpowers on the court.

Then for the last part, for all the people that look at me as their superhero, I'm super grateful. Yeah, I think everybody has special powers within them. I think we just need to find them. When we do find them, the world becomes a lot easier.

Q. Coco, you mentioned earlier that you sort of move past things once they have gone into the past. But you do learn from them. With regard to last year's final, first Grand Slam final, what have you taken away to learn from that? You have obviously been in a final since then, albeit not a Grand Slam one, have you had an opportunity to sort of apply those learnings, if you like?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, the journey to the final I learned a lot from, and I think I took a lot of a more relaxed approach to that tournament last year. It's not easy for me to find it every tournament, so that final I think I learned to enjoy the moment more. Honestly, I lost that final, and like for like a week or two, I really thought it was the worst thing ever, thought all these things.

I would say I am my biggest critic. Really, anybody on my team would say this. I need to speak more positively about myself, and it's something I'm continually continuing to work on. And really in my match today I applied it a lot. I was allowing myself to say no negative things to myself. You know, sometimes I think it. I do think it, but I try to combat it with that.

I tried it today at work, so I'm going to just keep going on

and try not to be the reason why I lose and let the reason be my opponent, not myself.

Q. You sort of answered my question, but I'd like to take it a little further. Since your days in the juniors through to last year's final and even the dip in results you had late last year, I mean, you're a young person who's faced one situation, pressurized situation after another. My question is: What is the craft, the art, of dealing with pressure? Of course we know Billie Jean says pressure is a privilege, but what is the craft of dealing with pressure?

COCO GAUFF: It's a learning process. I wish there was a recipe that each person could follow. I think that really you have to personalize it to yourself.

For me, I feel like a lot of my life I felt pressure. In juniors, you know, everybody pegged me to be the next whatever, next big thing or whatever, and then the way I entered the circuit, everybody was saying things about that.

So I did feel it early on that I had to, I think, outplay that talent that I had at that moment. And, yeah, I do think I am talented and was talented then, but I felt like, you know, I was 15 playing against grown women, so I don't know, at that time in my head I thought that I should be winning every match, and obviously that's not the case.

So I think the biggest thing was trying not to beat myself up, and, you know, you have seen players in the past have a big outbreak and then kind of folds. I think I was determined not to be one of them.

I don't know. I really can't put into words how I deal with it. It's a day-by-day process, and sometimes I deal with it great and other times I don't.

I think for the most part, as long as I keep moving forward, even though there is going to be some setbacks, I had setbacks this year, I had setbacks even last week, and I'm going to have setbacks in the future, but I think for the most part as long as I keep moving forward I should be okay.

Q. You know your next opponent very well. You played against her at the Billie Jean Cup in April.

COCO GAUFF: Who do I play? Sorry. Julia? Yeah, I didn't know who I played.

Q. What are your memories, and what do you expect for this match?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, obviously when I played her in BJK Cup I had a good match. Her style of game is quite obvious. It's better on clay than hard, so the next match will be tough. I'm going to have to play a lot of balls

obviously.

I think she has a great forehand, so I'm going to have to deal with that. Yeah, that's the most I can give you off the top of my head (smiling).

Yeah, I mean, obviously it's going to be a tough match. I saw her match against Kasatkina in Rome, so I'm going to expect to play a lot of balls.

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