

# National Bank Open

Tuesday, August 9, 2022

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

## Coco Gauff

### Press Conference



C. GAUFF/M. Brengle

6-1, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Coco, great match. Do you want to just walk us through the match.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, today, she's not an easy opponent to play. She always has a difficult game because it's so just all over the place. But she is super nice. And I thought today was some good tennis for me.

THE MODERATOR: First question?

**Q. Serena has decided to retire after the US Open. What's your reaction to that and if you can tell us her legacy and being a young Black woman for yourself?**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I knew it was coming eventually. I didn't know if it was going to be this US Open or the next one.

But, yeah, definitely, well, not really shocking but almost shocking news. Because she's just been playing forever, my whole life.

I don't know, a little bit sad because I have always wanted to play her. So I'm hoping that my draw in Cincinnati or US Open or even here can work out so we can play each other. Because that's just one of my goals.

But I think the legacy that she's left on the world, just through tennis, I mean she still has, I mean, she's not dead (laughing) but people are talking about it like she's dying. No, no, she's just moving on to different things.

But the legacy that she's left through her tennis career is something that I don't think any other player can probably touch. I think that the legacy that she will continue to leave throughout her life is something that can inspire many more generations.

**Q. As a young woman did you grow up admiring her and watching her and what did she mean to you?**

### Black female players trying to learn the game?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah. For me, I grew up watching her. I mean that's the reason why I play tennis.

Tennis being a predominantly white sport it definitely helped a lot. Because I saw somebody who looked like me dominating the game. It made me believe that I could dominate too.

Then my dad, I think her whole story, the Williams sisters story, not just Serena, with Mr. Williams and all that he's done for both of them inspired my dad to continue to coach me and help me. Even though he had not really much tennis experience. But he was like, If Mr. Williams can do it, then I can.

And I think it's not so much just what Serena and Venus has left it's also the whole Williams family in general.

**Q. There's a whole group of young players like yourself, Iga Emma, Leylah, they have all kind of spoken throughout the week how you guys are kind of leaving your imprint on the sport. What's it like to kind of be pushing each other at this same time and kind of raising the bar of women's tennis as well?**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think it's exciting. I think that for me, Leylah and Emma, I never played Emma in juniors but I played with her. But we've been playing in juniors, so it's cool to see us doing so well so quickly.

And with Iga, I also played juniors with her. But with Iga she's dominating right now. So I think definitely it pushes us to do even more and get to that No. 1 spot. Because she's doing it at such a young age as well.

I think it's great. I think iron sharpens iron. I love that term. I think it just makes you want to do better. I think watching Emma and Leylah do well at US Open made me want to do even better. I think iron sharpens iron.

**Q. Seeing Iga lift that trophy does it make you want it more?**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think no matter who lifted the trophy I think it made me want it more. But, yeah,



definitely.

I think that just speaks for anybody who has made a Grand Slam final. I think watching the person lifting the trophy makes you want it even more. Hopefully one day it will be my turn. If not, then that's okay too.

**Q. Speaking about that Grand Slam final. Curious how life has changed for you since then and what you learned from that experience that will help you for future Grand Slams and tournaments.**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think for me I learned a lot about myself. I learned that I can do it. I learned that I didn't need to put so much pressure on myself to do something.

I felt like I had to remind myself that I am 18. I felt like, you know, just the way I came on to the scene, everybody was saying all types of things about me. And it wasn't realistic, to be honest. But at that moment in my life I believed it so much.

But I think I learned a lot and I learned that losing is a part of the game. I learned that you can't win every tournament.

I think from that final it taught me that that was probably the most relaxed I've ever been in a tournament, where I wasn't focused on results. It taught me not to focus on results because then I actually get the results.

So, yeah, that mindset is something that I'm trying to stay in and continue to get better so that it's not just a final the next time.

**Q. You were about 15, 16 when you burst on to the scene and the U.S. has been looking for the next Serena for a long time. You were one of those players that got that tag. How unfair do you think those comparisons have been and how kind of impossible is it to replicate her career do you think now with the experience now that you have?**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I feel like for me when I started the game I wanted to be the best of the best. I still want that.

So I don't think I want to replicate anybody's career. I mean it would be cool to get 23 Grand Slams. Like I'll take it.

But also at the same time I'm my own player. And even as a young player, like even when I was 8 years old people were calling me the next Serena. And I never liked that because, A, I feel like for her to be compared to someone who has done nothing is almost a little bit of a disrespect

for her.

Also, B, I never, I wanted to be like her, I wanted to emulate my game, but I never wanted to be her.

Because there will never be another Serena and there will never be another me. There will never be another anybody. And I think everybody's unique to themselves and their lifestyle's unique to them.

I think in general in sports, in any sport really, I think comparing, it's kind of stupid. Because no one's ever going to be the next anything.

And there's a reason why she's the GOAT. Because she's the greatest of all time. And I'm sure when I retire she's still going to be the greatest of all time. But I hope that I can get close to that.

**Q. About Serena, I think it's widely understood she's the greatest player of all time on the court, but it also seems like she's somebody who has always understood her impact off the court and beyond tennis. Can you talk about that about what Serena meant to you and the game and just beyond the game to the culture and everything.**

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think that's what makes her the GOAT. I mean if she had 23 Grand Slams and was a terrible person I wouldn't consider her the GOAT.

I think for me what makes her the GOAT is her personality and all that she's done off the court to fight for equality, to fight for young players like me and continue to lead in the way that she does lead. I think that's what we really should be focused on.

I think that's what, I mean, that's just Serena. I don't think there will be anybody that can do what she did with all the adversity that she had to face. I don't think there will be another player that will do that.

I think, yeah, she's the GOAT and undisputed too, in my opinion. Well I don't really think it's an opinion, I think it's a fact (laughing).

**Q. You talked about how the pressure has been on you since such a young age to potentially replicate what Venus and Serena have done. And you talk about it in such a calm sort of manner. How have you been able to deflect that pressure? How do you deal with those challenges? We're talking a lot about mental health initiatives at the tournament this year. What are ways that you take care of your own mental health when it comes to blocking or deflecting those**

## kind of conversations.

COCO GAUFF: I feel like, for me, for the longest I felt like I didn't, the pressure was there and I felt it. And I felt like I was just denying it and denying that it was getting to me.

Then I reached a point I was like, Yeah, I'm feeling pressure and I should accept the pressure. Pressure is a privilege. And I'm glad that people expect things from me. It is a privilege.

So now it's not so much deflecting from the conversation because the conversation's going to always be there. I think it's more so accepting it and just rising to the occasion.

I think that right now I feel like I'm rising to the occasion. Whereas before I felt like I was almost crumbling to the pressure because I was trying to deflect it.

So I think the best mindset for me was accepting it and just rising to the occasion. Because I love a challenge. But I think it's better than just deflecting and denying.

But regarding my mental health. Honestly, I think I'm just enjoying the wins and the losses of the tournament. I started to enjoy competing more again.

I feel like I was too focused on losing and not loving winning as much as I should. I was almost going to the match like, I hope I don't lose this match. Telling myself that. Where I should just be saying like, I can win this match.

That was the biggest difference in the mindset. It's such a small change, but it makes the biggest difference when you actually learn to love winning more than you hate losing.

Which that's been my challenge and will always be my challenge. Because I hate losing. But I need to learn to appreciate the wins more.

**Q. I'm guessing you were asked about Serena. But as a young girl when you think about where you are now, and I know you've got along career ahead of you, why was it so important to have role models like Venus and Serena? And now that you're living the life that you are, the wins and the losses, what do you feel like you've taken from what you saw from afar and applying it to what you're doing every day?**

COCO GAUFF: Wow. I mean I've learned a lot from them. I've learned, like what I've taken from them is, you know, people always try to tell me, Oh, you're going to be the next whatever, blah, blah, blah.

And Serena being considered I think the GOAT for like at least the second half of her career. And she never like succumbed to that pressure, I feel like. I think she overcame it.

I think that's something that I take from it and try to learn from it. Not that I'm ever, not that I'm at her level and experiencing the same pressure she is. But in the moment I think I try to emulate that.

And then with Venus, I mean I had the pleasure of playing doubles with Venus, so I got to know her on a more personable scale.

It really struck me how much she loved the game, really, at her age. And even though we lost her match. But she truly loves tennis. I'm sure Serena does too but I never got to talk to her about that. But I got to talk to Venus about it. And so she truly loves the game.

It almost makes me like emotional that they're both going to be, well, Venus hasn't announced, but I'm assuming it's going to come soon, that they're both going to be retiring soon. And, yeah, because they really love the game.

And that's the biggest thing I've gotten when playing with Venus is how much she loves the game. Like I'm here at 18 and she, I don't know, I think she was 40, 41 at that time, I don't remember. And she's here playing a first round doubles match on a side court and she was giving it her all. And there's nothing else she needs to give us in the game.

For me I just love that. And I think it changed my perspective. And I was like, If she's playing this match and she's enjoying this match, I need to start enjoying my matches more.

So I think that's what I've learned from both of them. I think that's why both of them will forever be talked about. And when the GOAT talk, not just in tennis but in all sports. I think Serena for me she's the GOAT of all GOATS. And Venus I mean she's up there too.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports...