

National Bank Open

Thursday, August 8, 2024

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/Wang Yafan

6-4, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Who has the first question for Coco?

Q. Your opponent definitely made you fight for it, you had to dig deep a little bit in the first and second set. How would you say your ability to problem solve and kind of make in-game judgments has kind of evolved over the last year or so?

COCO GAUFF: I think overall I was playing the right way. I think I just made some errors, which was expected today, it's only my fourth day on hard court or, yeah, I took some time off after, well, two days off (laughing), some time, not a lot, two days off after Olympics. My first hit on hard court, well, actually I hit with my 11-year-old brother for like 30 minutes, but my first hit on hard court was here on Sunday night.

Overall I'm happy with how I played. It's not easy transitioning from all these different surfaces in such a short amount of time, but I am happy to get pushed through.

Q. In terms of the adjustments and making that quick adjustment, what are the biggest things, explain to the layperson what the biggest difference is coming from Roland Garros to Toronto.

COCO GAUFF: For me it's just my movement. I think, you know, getting to balls maybe quicker sometimes than I think, or slower sometimes, and the stopping and going. I slide sometimes on hard court, but obviously not as easily as on clay, I'm sure that's everybody. Yeah, obviously the pace of the ball, the way you play, balls don't bounce up as much. I think overall it's just the movement that I'm still getting used to, and that can only just come with more reps, but I am confident that I will find it. I feel happy with how today went. I had chances to make it maybe a 6-2, 6-2 match, so, yeah...

Q. Obviously coming back from the Olympics is



probably definitely tough, changing time zones, but I'm also kind of curious what the experience was like being around other high-level elite athletes in their respective sports. Does that kind of reenergize you seeing these guys perform at the highest level? I know you have some sort of relationship with Gabby Thomas, and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone just won the gold medal.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I know, I just watched it.

Q. Does that kind of reenergize you a little bit being around people like that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it gives me a lot of inspiration. Seeing Sydney, and then Tara, she won the long jump, and then, yeah, Gabby Thomas winning the 200, and Sha'Carri winning silver, just so many people that I got to talk to.

It definitely is inspiring, just seeing how all of them went through respective downs in their careers and to be able to, you know, find it, and each of them going through different mental and physical challenges.

So, yeah, it does inspire me, and just also it puts perspective to, you know, of my age. Like, a lot of them are 24, between 24 to 27 range, so I guess it puts it into perspective sometimes, you know, you want things to happen now. I think I just learned to just trust in my training and trust in the journey, just with talking with them and learning about their stories. You know, sometimes when you do well young you just, you know, want everything to happen now. All of them at some point did well young, just because they're so good, but I just learned to trust the journey and trust maturity and just your game is going to reach its final form in a few years. I'm 20, so hopefully by like 24 I'm there (laughing).

Q. How much, is there ever any, not FOMO, but do you ever wonder what would have happened if you'd stuck with track when you watch the track competition?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I actually do, and I do, I mean, I do feel like I could have been, I don't know if I would have been as good as I was in tennis in track, but I strongly feel like if I would have trained I could have been an Olympian.



Track is the only sport I would say that in just because I did do well in middle school like never training, I didn't go to one track practice, and I won all my races except two, and both were against the same girl and she was in 8th grade.

Yeah, my mom said too, she ran track at Florida State, so she was like, I think if, you know, I think 400 would have been my race. Noah Lyles said he saw me as like a 400 hurdler, but I'm like kind of scared of hurdlers, so, yeah, I don't think I would have been like that (laughing), but definitely 400 or longer would have been my thing.

I do wish that, sometimes I'm like, what could have happened. I even talked to my dad about putting me in some local track meets in the off-season, just for (laughing), you know, just for the fun of it, just to see where I could go. I think I do want to do that. I'd do, maybe one off-season, just run a race, it doesn't hurt, I wouldn't train much for it, but just to see what my time would be would be pretty cool. I never ran out of blocks before so I guess I would have to learn how to do that.

Q. It's really interesting I think because you're so young and you had so much success and you've basically gone from being the hunter to the hunted because everyone is trying to play their best tennis against you. I'm curious, after all that you've gone through and all that you've achieved, how have you navigated the pressure and the weight of expectation that comes from having success at an early age and having to replicate that success, and finding new ways and maybe new ways to play the opponents who have come to know you as a certain kind of player?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it's definitely difficult. I feel like a lot of times people play their best tennis against the higher-ranked players, and that's just because they have nothing to lose, so it's definitely a difference.

Like you said, being, the, whatever you said, you know what you said, (laughing). Yeah, but I think overall it just makes me better. If everybody's playing me at their high level it can only make me better. Yeah, the thing is that, I guess, when you have success young, I think people, especially like fans of the sport tend to forget, you know, you're still developing, and no sport, maybe except gymnastics where you're really reaching your peak at like 20 years old, I think that's probably one of the few. I mean, this last Olympics showed us that that's also not true, with all the ages of some of the gold medalists, and obviously Simone Biles.

I think a lot of times tennis fans kind of forget that when they see somebody do well, and they forget that that person is developing. It's great that, you know, not just me,

but other girls are doing well so fast, but I think we also have to give grace on us because, you know, we're still becoming a better player. A lot of times when, in the past, when you look at reasons why some younger girls maybe don't do as well as they get older it's more mental, if anything, not because they physically can't handle it.

Yeah, I think overall I'm just trying to put that in perspective, and honestly the Olympics was a great learning experience for me, and it really showed me that perspective a lot.

Q. I know one of the things that you've been working on is your serve and you made a few tweaks to it recently. Just kind of wondering what that process has been like as you try to implement something like that in the middle of the season.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it is getting better. Today I served well, I think I had like four or five aces. A couple double-faults here, I think it was like four, so definitely, you know, for me, I try to give myself maybe two per set. I think I was at four or five, so, yeah, I think that's kind of where I expect to be. Obviously you want to go with no double-faults, but I think just because I go so big on the first serve it's kind of a risk that you are willing to take.

Yeah, it is something that I'm working on. I am happy, like, compared to the Olympics, I thought I didn't serve as well as I would have liked to, so coming here it was important for me to just go for my serve every point, and I think that's what I tried to commit to doing today and playing against all the targets.

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