

US OPEN

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Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/L. Siegemund

3-6, 6-2, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Coco, great match. Tough three-setter. Assess your performance, if you would.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, first rounds are always tricky, especially she played through qualifying. She's a tricky opponent in general. She does a lot of quirky stuff with the slices and coming to the net, all of that.

I played her before in the past, obviously a long time ago. I think I lost. I'm just happy that I was able to overcome all that. Wasn't playing my best tennis.

I think most of the time, every Grand Slam you have one bad match. I'm glad I was able to get that out of the way in the first round.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Brad has always had a philosophy of winning ugly. Is that a message that Brad and Pierre gave to you and you were able to show that tonight?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I definitely won ugly tonight. It was a lot of weird points, with the slicing. Usually something that I usually do well against, opponents who slice. We were prepared for it. I think today was just execution.

I just came from playing Muchova last week who has an amazing slice, but obviously she's a more aggressive player than Laura. I think I was trying my best to just stay in the points, try to push her on defense. She was coming to the net a lot. I lost to her in doubles at Wimbledon, so I knew she had good hands. She proved that she did. I think she only missed two or three volleys.

So, yeah, today was truly winning ugly.

Q. Was that the most you saw an opponent talk to the umpire in a match you ever dealt with?



COCO GAUFF: Yes, really. Yeah, I mean, that was an interesting match. Yeah, it was the most I've seen a discussion about the rules which are in place.

Q. How much were you fighting to keep your focus? At one point you went to the umpire yourself. How much were you trying to think, Okay, engage, let me get this out of my system, keep it cool?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I was really patient the whole match. She was going over the time since the first set. I never said anything. I would look at the umpire, and she didn't do anything.

Then obviously the crowd started to notice that she was taking long, so you would hear people in the crowd yelling, Time, doing the watch motion.

On her serve, even though you're supposed to be on the time, I was being nice. My team told me I should have spoke up earlier. But then it got to the point where she was doing it a lot on my serve. My issue with that was the ref was calling the score like a couple seconds after the point was finished, so it made it look like I was serving abnormally fast.

As you guys know, you've watched my matches, I'm not a fast server. I'm not a slow one. I'm like right in the middle. That was getting annoying, too. It wasn't like we were having long rallies. I know sometimes after a long rally, the ref waits a few seconds. I totally get that. But we were having two-ball rallies. It would be eight, I would count in my head, and then the score would be called. It was just a lot of that.

I was finally happy when the time violation came. But obviously on my serve, I was like, She has to be ready when I'm serving. I'm not a fast server, but obviously when you're calling the score eight seconds later, it looks like I'm serving 24 on the clock. Usually I look at the clock and try to serve around the 14-, 15-second mark.

Q. How much of a mental boost was it winning that first game of the second set that went 12 deuces?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it was a great mental boost. I didn't break her in the first. I think I had a lot of opportunities in the first to break, so I was glad to get over that hump. I



think that changed the momentum of the match. After that it was pretty much smooth sailing. I got broken in the third. I think that game was a vital momentum changer.

Q. I think it was a weird situation on the monitor that we could hear a little more than usual. I don't know how much they talk to you normally. They were telling you to go up to the umpire earlier.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah.

Q. How much do you have to tune that out and decide yourself? Having the extra voice, how do you deal with that?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I heard them tell me that. I was aware of the time really since, like, the second game of the match, about how long, because I would return and I would look at the clock.

I don't know. I do agree with them that I should have put more pressure on the referee a little bit earlier in the match, but I was also at the same time, I think when mostly they were telling me that was in the second set. That's when I was doing well, so I didn't want to break the momentum and everything.

Yeah, in the third set, I thought for like half a second maybe I shouldn't say nothing after I hit that serve. Then I was like, Okay, this is going on too long. I was like, All right, I have to say something.

I mean, I think the pressure worked. Obviously she gave those time violations after that. I don't know. I think the officiating needs to be the same regardless of the player.

There was also a situation after the long game in the first set, she was sitting down. I told the ref that she's not allowed to sit down because that's the rule.

She said, Well, it was a long game.

I don't know exactly what I said. I said, It doesn't matter if it's a long game. Endurance is part of tennis. If I'm going in the gym four hours and I'm running tracks and doing cardio, that's to prepare me for these long moments so she should be as prepared.

I think that was the situation that I was getting frustrated. I felt like the rules were being bent. That's why a lot of players get mad when these time violations are called because one ref is letting them go over, the other is more strict on the time. I think tennis needs to be more strict on the rules for everybody regardless of every situation.

Q. What was your reaction to having the Obamas there tonight? Did you get a chance to meet them?

COCO GAUFF: I actually just met them right before I came in here. So my mood is a little bit nicer. Maybe I'm saying nicer things than I actually planned on (smiling). That lightened my mood. I literally texted, I was like, that's brightened my mood so much.

I wasn't sure they were here or not. I saw the Secret Service. I didn't know if it was Mr. Biden and Mrs. Biden. I knew it was somebody. Then I heard that maybe Mr. Clinton was coming. I didn't know who exactly it was. So I didn't know until after the match.

I didn't see them in the presidential box. I was obviously looking at that, but they weren't I guess in my eyeline. But afterwards, yeah, they told me they wanted to say hi.

I've met Mrs. Obama before. They told me it was just her initially. Then Mr. Obama was there in the room, too. I was like, Oh, my God. I haven't soaked it in because I literally just walked in here. I think I'm going to never forget that moment for the rest of my life. Yeah, I went from being really upset after a win to, like, being really happy. So I'm glad I got to meet them. They gave me some good advice, too.

Q. Share a little bit of that with us.

COCO GAUFF: They just told me how I handle myself in these situations. She said it's good to speak up for myself. I think she was happy that I spoke up for myself today (smiling).

Q. I don't want to sound like I'm going off of that, but my question was: Why did you choose today as the day where you kind of like stood up for yourself in that situation? In D.C. you were saying in the past being so young you were a lot more bottled up, probably would have let this slide. Why today?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I don't know. It's like a thing. I really don't like confrontation all that much. Yeah, I was thinking about it the whole match. I don't know. I wasn't sure if I was in the right or not until it, like, happened multiple times. Then I was like, Okay, I know I'm in the right.

I think it just reached a point where I was just really frustrated. For me, I try my best not to let my emotions to take over myself. I wanted to express my frustration, but also being censored. I didn't want any bombs to fly or anything. I was trying to best communicate how I was feeling to the referee.

I think she understood. Maybe not. But, yeah, I think that certain situations like this, when it happens over and over, I'm not going to complain if it's once or twice. It was at least seven times that I counted.

Yeah, I'm usually not a player to confront, confrontations with refs and everything. I tried to explain that to her. I'm not a fast-paced player, I'm not Nick. I bounce the ball six times before I serve. I ask for three or four balls and I throw it back to the ball kids because I like to get the newest balls. I know how much time I'm taking and it's a normal amount of time.

Q. There are lots of players in all sports who feed off that sense of injustice in a game. How do you think it affects you, the fact that you don't like to use that outwardly?

COCO GAUFF: I think today it really helped. I know I lost like the 5-1 game, but that was long after that. I think it helped. The frustration was bottling, to be honest. Yeah, I think honestly if I could do it all over again, I would have said something earlier, maybe on a changeover, not so much like when I was serving.

I would have still done that, but maybe I could have done it in the second set, maybe say, Hey, to the ref, can you watch the time in a more, like, calm way. Then it puts it in her head that I'm aware of it and she should be aware of it too.

I wish I would have did that earlier. Other than that, I don't regret talking to the ref the way I did. I actually watched the video back when I was taking the ice bath. I wanted to be sure before I came in here. Sometimes you have these emotions, you forget what you said. I would still say everything I said in that moment again.

Q. What does it feel like when you're on the court and the crowd is turning against your opponent so vocally? Is it distracting or confusing, motivating?

COCO GAUFF: In the early part of the match, they were definitely cheering after she missed first serves. I don't know if the TV saw it, but I would try to put my hand like this or go like that in between serves to tell the crowd not to do that.

But then when it came to the time violation stuff, I feel like you as a player know the situation and also she knows, like, I'm American. I didn't want to tell the crowd to calm down, to be honest, because I know that they were seeing what everybody else was seeing. I think that's part of sports in general.

It doesn't really add anything to me, or anything I guess. Obviously it adds more amp to me when they're cheering for me. I wouldn't say I necessarily like booing, any bad stuff like that.

But, yeah, when it came to, like, cheering between serves, I did try my best to deescalate -- there's not much I can do while she's serving -- deescalate the situation. But when it came to the time violation, at that point it's sports, it's New York City, I'm not going to try to calm that down (smiling).

Q. You play Andreeva next. How do you like the position of playing players younger than you? On Ashe, you are the player that knows the court well. Will you enjoy being in that position?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, honestly the age is not anything I think about. I never thought about it before when I was on the younger end and I never thought about it in the past when I was on the older end.

It means nothing. She has her ranking and that's all that matters. I think she's 16 or 17. 16, I don't know. She had a ranking then, that means she deserves to be here.

I think the media, in general, put too much on age. It doesn't matter if I'm playing someone younger. Yeah, didn't matter when I was younger, I was still beating some people older than me. She has an equal opportunity to do that on Wednesday.

I'm going to approach the match as I would any other match and try to do better for what I did at French Open. I was able to get through that one. I was tight in some moments. I think I'm going to try to improve upon that.

Q. To what degree does your showing of maturity matter to you in situations like tonight and in general?

COCO GAUFF: It was something I was thinking about in the match, to be honest. I didn't want to come off as a complainer.

I guess when you're in the moment, I don't know, when I was in the moment, I was thinking about it since the second game, to be honest. I don't know, sometimes your head, also being in the public image, you think about all these actions that doesn't have to do with tennis, like talking with the ref, throwing the racquet, banging the racquet. It's stuff that I think about, honestly.

Yeah, I do think when I went up to the ref, I tried to take a deep breath, explain my side of the story the best that I could, but also getting my point across.

It is something that I think about, my maturity level, because I know it's something that people look at a lot. I know you do one wrong move, people are going to call you all types of names and tear you down.

Today I think it was important to show you can do all this, still stick to your ground, and people are going to respect you. I think as long as you approach a person with respect, then everything should be fine.

I mean, I didn't approach her with any type of disrespect. I was being respectful. That's what I was taught, to do things in a respectful way. Only when you're disrespected, then you're allowed to get disrespectful.

I don't think the ref disrespected me so I came up to her in a respectful way. Yeah, that's all I have to say about that.

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