

US OPEN

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Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/E. Mertens

3-6, 6-3, 6-0

THE MODERATOR: Coco, take us through your mindset going into the third set.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, I was playing well in the second set. I think after the 2-3 game, yeah, I moved straight through. I think I established my game plan.

In the third, I was playing great tennis. I think the match was really physical the first two sets even though the scoreline doesn't show that.

Yeah, in the third I was just trying to fight for every point. Yeah, that's how I was able to get through that match.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. In the first set, what was she doing that was making it difficult or was it you? Was it something that was off in your game?

COCO GAUFF: I think it was a little bit of both. She was playing a little bit more aggressive than the last time I played her. Also I had some areas where I was not missing by a lot, it was a little bit, on like balls that I probably could have ended the point on.

It was the right decision. I just probably needed to take a little bit more margin. Those points add up. She's not an easy player. You can't keep making errors on her.

Yeah, she's the type of player where she steps in, if you give her something short, especially on the backhand side. She was doing well of attacking on that end. Even on the forehand she was being aggressive.

I think in the second I tried to keep her playing back and off her back foot, also coming in a little bit more so she knew I wasn't going to stay back every time she was playing defense.



Q. What does that do for your confidence when you can dig your way out of trouble?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it does a lot for me. I think maybe that could have been a match that I could have lost in the past, especially breaking her, then immediately getting broken back.

I'm figuring out these situations, making it easier and easier as the matches go. Yeah, I think she played some of her best tennis she's played this season, especially in the first couple sets, first two sets.

I mean, when I'm playing not my best, still able to figure out how to win these matches, it's good.

Q. You've had a lot of famous folks coming out to watch you play. I don't know if you saw Justin and...

COCO GAUFF: I saw them immediately on the Jumbotron. I don't know if the camera saw me looking up. I hoped if I lost the match, they weren't going to blame it on that.

Q. What does it feel like to have these big names coming to watch you play? Is there any celebrity you'd feel starstruck seeing in the crowd?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it's crazy. I've come to the Open for years. Being a fan, just looking in the crowd to see who's coming, looking in the president box, the suites, to see who's there, now being a player, it's really crazy.

I'm really honored I guess that people spend -- I don't even know what day it is, Saturday night, I don't know, Friday. It's Friday? Oh, my gosh. The slams, they're all jumbled. Friday night watching me play tennis.

I was definitely starstruck with Justin Bieber. 'Never Say Never' was like the first, I think one of my favorite songs when I was a kid. Then 'Baby, Oh, Baby'. I could go through all his songs. Then Hailey, too, coming. I guess it was a little date night for them, which was really cool.

Obviously Jimmy Butler, he's came to a couple of my matches. I wasn't as surprised he was there. I still am like, Man, this guy is busy, why is he coming to watch me play?



It's a really cool experience. Yeah, I'm just happy I guess and really honored.

I guess which celebrity I would be starstruck, definitely Beyonce. If she ever came, oh, my goodness, I hope they would not show her on the screen. Maybe at the end (smiling).

Q. Adjusting to the night conditions, did you feel you needed a set? Channeling your inner Raven.

COCO GAUFF: L.A., I was hot Raven for Halloween. You did your research.

Q. Was there a favorite episode that led you to having this comeback tonight?

COCO GAUFF: I don't know if I have a favorite episode. I just like sometimes when she loses control.

But, yeah, tonight, like, I don't know, I feel like I was thinking about everything sometimes. When I'm playing tennis, I think about a lot of things outside of tennis. I was thinking about the Renaissance Tour during my match. I think about a lot of different things.

Honestly, it keeps me relaxed. I don't know if it's a coping mechanism or what. I thought about Marvel today. There's a lot of things. Obviously the Biebers. There was a lot of things I was thinking about.

Yeah, today was just a fun night. Playing on Ashe, I don't think there's anything like it, especially when you win like a long rally. I was saying that with my team today, there's nothing like that. No tennis atmosphere matches to nighttime an Ashe, honestly. I've played in pretty much all of them at this point, and there's nothing that compares to Arthur Ashe at night.

Q. Next up Caroline Wozniacki. Interesting dynamic because when she stepped away just as you were coming on tour. Before you were on tour, what do you know about her, remember? What do you expect that matchup to be like?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I don't think she's going to give me anything. She's obviously one of those players that was a great mover when she played. She got a lot of balls back, so I'm expecting long rallies.

Also I've watched her last couple matches this week. I think she's playing a little bit more aggressive I guess compared to when she was starting, before she won Australia. I think she played that tournament really well.

Yeah, it's going to be interesting. I never thought I would ever be in this position, especially after she retired and came back. But she's still like a really fit player. She looked like she was striking the ball today pretty clean, especially after I was watching her match the last couple sets against Jenny.

Yeah, it's not going to be an easy matchup. I think she probably knows my game pretty well. I don't know if she commented on any of my matches. I know she's watched tennis even when she was retired. So I'm sure she knows my game just from watching.

I know a little bit of her just from watching her from growing up. It's going to be really cool. I'm really excited. Playing a legend like her is really exciting. I'm not going to take the moment for granted.

Q. What have you learned over the last few years about the level of work that is needed to advance at majors?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I learned that the details matter. Like every day taking care, recovery. Even the weeks leading up, all that matters in this tournament. Every point matters. Even if you're up 4-0, 40-Love, every point matters. I think that's the most I've learned.

Also I've learned that you got to stay in the matches and don't give up. I've never had a problem with that.

But, yeah, it's just like playing these players, in the Grand Slams everybody's giving their all and then some. I think people are giving their all in the other tournaments, but even more so here because it's a big stage. You have to really push yourself to the limits.

I also think the more experience you get being pushed to these limits, the further I guess those limits can go.

Q. You mentioned all the days blend into one. What is the general stress level during a slam compared to when you're not playing a tournament?

COCO GAUFF: Honestly, I've been pretty relaxed this time around. I think before Wimbledon I was really stressed. Even the slams before where I was doing well, I was still very stressed.

Now I'm just really relaxed because I know that I'm giving it my all. At the end of the day that's all you can do.

Yeah, day by day, I mean, honestly, I've been busy with the other events that I'm doing. But I like doing that 'cause I think you don't have to dwell or think about your next

match against someone that thinks ahead a little bit. So I try to stay in the moment.

As soon as I finished my match, I was thinking already about my next matchup. Sometimes I tell myself to slow down and just reset. So I think playing the other events gives me something to think about other than the singles, which is definitely the most stressful.

Also at the same time I'm just trying to do better at enjoying life also in the slams, not always surrounding it about tennis. Like, I don't know, going shopping, going to dinner, just doing normal things that I would do during a practice week.

Q. You've played a lot of tennis over the last couple days between singles, doubles, and mixed doubles. How are you feeling with all that tennis? Do you actually have time to do anything like shopping?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, I've been playing night a lot, except that one day. Yeah, I do stuff, like, in the morning.

Last night honestly I was really happy that even though it was a long day for mixed, I was happy because I knew I was playing night tonight. I was happy my mixed was a little bit later than expected. I always feel like the night is just something I don't practice on a lot when I'm home. Nobody wants to be out on the court at 8 p.m. You want to be with your friends and stuff. I guess it's not a surrounding I practice in a lot. I was happy about that.

To be honest, the doubles compared to the singles doesn't take that much energy, especially in mixed when you have the guy really does most of the work. I was just serving and Jack was doing his thing. We didn't pull it out, but it was still fun.

I just enjoy it. I don't feel like it's as taxing as right now as it may seem. Is it something I'm going to do every time in my career? Probably not. I'm 19. I have a lot of fuel in my tank. I'm really enjoying it. Honestly it's been helping my nerve levels a lot.

Q. Would you say the crowd tonight helped you out more in a match you won than any other? A couple times you took your hand, saying, C'mon. Did you feel extra from the crowd, you were wanting more?

COCO GAUFF: It wasn't that I was wanting more. They were giving me enough. I think people like when the player does that. I like when the player does that watching. I'm like, Okay, let me do it.

There's been times in the past when I wanted to do it. I

don't know, I just didn't do it. Then I realized how many other players are doing it. I was like, Okay, I can do it. They love it. They do get even louder when they do that. I love it, too.

They definitely helped me a lot in the match. They were doing some chants. As soon as I came out from the set break after I lost the first set, they were rooting me on. Yeah, they've helped me in pretty much all my matches so far this week, and obviously like all my matches that I played in the past here on any court, honestly. Even doubles, they're cheering really loud.

I just feel really honored to play in this country and play in New York City and have so many people supporting me. I hope that they can still stand behind me many, many more years from now.

Q. What was it like playing with Jack versus Pegula? Did you use those matches for tonight's match?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it was definitely a weird dynamic 'cause there was also a couple times where I would look at him - Was that your ball? - sometimes when they would dropshot him. I'm used to playing with Jess. The guys are just a lot faster naturally. Sometimes he would get to stuff I wasn't expecting.

Also it was his last match so I did feel a little bit of pressure just because I wanted to do well for him. We couldn't pull it out.

I first met him a long time ago, he doesn't even remember this, when I was 12 years old. It was really cool to be on one of his last matches with his career.

Playing with Jess, honestly, I think I'm a little bit more relaxed. I do feel in mixed doubles you're kind of competing with the girls, so you want to play better than the other girl. Whereas in doubles, you just want to be good.

I don't know if I like mixed, to be honest. It's not one of my favorite events. I honestly don't know how many more times I'll play this. I want to play in the Olympics, so I need to find a partner for that.

It's difficult. I don't like being aced that many times. I really don't like that at all. Also when the guy is too nice to the girl, I hate that, too. You can hit me, I can take it. So yeah. It's little things like that that pet peeve me.

I think it's cool for the fans to see just a different spectrum of the game competing on one court.

