

US OPEN

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Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/C. Wozniacki

3-6, 6-3, 6-1

THE MODERATOR: Coco, we're going to go straight to questions.

COCO GAUFF: Oh, you're not asking a question. This is new (smiling). Sorry.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. When you're in a match like that and you fall behind in the third set right away, how are you calculating in your mind how much risk you need to start taking?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it was something I was actually thinking about a lot. She's a player that I feel like she banks on your mistakes. Also you can't really hit the ball too short. She's going to be aggressive as well. So it's really difficult finding that balance.

I did lose that second set off of a lot of errors, to be honest. I was trying to tell myself just to be ready to play an extra ball, 'cause she's a player, when you think you win the point, it's not over.

Yeah, so I was telling myself to be ready for another ball to come back.

Q. You've played in all the big courts in all the slams. How would you compare them? What is it, other than the size, that makes this one different?

COCO GAUFF: Definitely the crowd. I mean, being an American playing here, they're backing you. So, yeah, they backed me today a lot. Had some chants going on in the stadium, which was really nice.

Yeah, definitely the crowd. Day and night, they're still really energetic. Obviously the night sessions are I think even more electric. But the crowd doesn't really compare to any of the other slams.



Q. Obviously they're playing tonight, so we're not going to get another opportunity to ask you about your next opponent. Starting with Iga, what are your thoughts on what you've learned from facing her as many times as you have and on winning the last one?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, she's a tough opponent. I think especially in the Grand Slams she hits an extra gear.

What I've learned? I mean, just staying in there. I mean, I got to play every point to the maximum potential. Taking my chances the last match, I mean, it was a physical match so I know if I were to play her, it's going to be a physical match. Yeah, I'm just going to be ready to fight mentally and physically.

With Jelena, she's a striker, ball-striker. I lost to her in Australian Open this year. She's hot or cold, to be honest. Same thing, honestly. Just staying in the match. I might get some more free points with her, more so than Iga. Maybe not. Maybe she'll hit so many winners.

Really, both of them are tough opponents to be ready to face.

Q. Sounded like Brad was trying to tell you to play longer points. You went out and played shorter points. How much of what he was telling you were you taking in? How much were you trying to problem-solve for yourself?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think it's based off the feeling in the match. The longer points, I definitely agree that playing longer points is to my advantage. But I felt in that moment, playing Caroline, watching her play so many years, that that's what she feeds off of is the longer points, feeding off of you making errors.

I think he was really trying to tell me to go for less, but also at the same time I watched her play so many years. I didn't want to play into that game where I was not pushing but not playing the game that I like to play.

It was just finding the balance between playing the longer points. I really think he wanted me to take less risk. There's even a couple times in that first set on her service game where I made some silly -- not silly errors, but bad errors. I wasn't really trying to end the point. I was just



trying to be aggressive.

I think for me it's finding the balance of playing the longer points but being the aggressor. I know playing against her, you have to be the aggressor. I wasn't taking her having kids, I told my coaches after the match, I said, she's definitely like top-five fittest people on tour after today. She was that before, for sure.

Q. How did the Citi Open in late July, you said you were in a rebuilding period, you compared what you were doing to building a house. With the summer you've had, what do you think about the building process? Where would you say you're at at this point?

COCO GAUFF: Still building. I mean, today there's things that I think I could do better on the serve. I mean, the return games I did pretty well. I think I could have handled my service games a lot better. Still picking the right shots, in that second set I had a lot of short balls, just errors. I think I need to go for bigger targets.

I literally told myself before the match to try not to bait into that. Sometimes when you're playing an opponent that can get to a lot of balls, you bait into going for more and more. I fell into that bait in the second set. I was telling myself just to go for the bigger targets, make her have to play extraordinary shots. That was the difference between the second and the first.

Q. What impressed you the most about what Caroline was able to do, given that she was off for over three years, two children?

COCO GAUFF: She's incredibly fit. That's how she won a lot of her matches when she was -- I don't even know if it's prime or not. I think she's playing great tennis.

It's kind of hard for me to speak on it to before because I never played her, never practiced with her. Honestly, when I was watching her, I was a young person so I don't think I understood the game as much as I do now.

I know she probably has the reputation back then for being kind of a counter-puncher, playing back. I think today she was doing a little bit of that, but I also think she was playing more aggressive. I think she was hitting her forehand down the line really well. It caught me in some moments, probably something I wasn't expecting.

Yeah, I think the fitness that she has, usually with most players I know that I can outlast them. Today I was confident that I could against her, but it was definitely, like, I don't know. The beginning you're thinking she's coming back, maybe she'll get tired. I didn't feel that at all.

I think really I just started to raise my level. But I don't think the match was based off the fitness of her getting tired, whereas some of my opponents hit a wall. Today I think I just played better.

I think she'll be a top contender, probably a seed, by the end of this year, to be honest, for the Australian Open.

Q. It's always interesting when a player takes on a new coaching team. Could you talk about how Brad has affected your game, how he's worked on your forehand? Has he told you any favorite stories?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think he's brought a lot to me. The scouting, I think it's incredible. He knows basically every player, probably just from commentating, knows how to play them. I think the scouting reports are quite accurate. Sometimes you have to change things up. Today I had to change things up. That's also the player.

Also with Pere, I think for me he's been doing more of the day-to-day stuff. Brad is not always able to be there with ESPN and everything. He's been helping me a lot just with the footwork and things like that, the decision-making. I think they work together.

They're two different generations. I think they're both a good mesh. I was worried about being with the older person, to be honest, before I met Brad. He's older but he still has the mind of, like, a 20-year-old, maybe even younger, a 10-year-old kid sometimes.

The guy has offered me Jolly Ranchers. I don't know if you knew this. My favorite Brad story is he played pretty much every match with a Jolly Rancher in his mouth. He's been giving me Jolly Ranchers all the time. I take them but I don't eat them. At this point I can't have Jolly Ranchers every five minutes. So that's my favorite Brad story.

He also doesn't like even numbers. He only likes odd numbers. Whenever he says something, you ask him what time it is, he's going to say 1:53 or 1:59. He won't say 12 or something basic. That's my favorite Brad story.

He's just a really quirky man. He doesn't sleep. He wakes up at 3:30 every morning. He was doing this in D.C. He goes for walks. He also has been sending me crazy playlists of '60s and '70s bands, but I haven't kept up with it.

THE MODERATOR: Wow.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah. I could keep going, but I'm not because I know other people have other questions

(smiling).

Q. With Ben winning earlier today, obviously a good group of Americans through, what does the wave of energy feel like right now?

COCO GAUFF: It's really great. I mean, I was so happy. Obviously I know Tommy really well, too. But I was really happy for Ben's win. Especially they played each other in Australia, so it's nice to just see the competitiveness between the countrymen and us all doing well.

Yeah, with Ben and Frances winning guarantees a person in the semi. With Jess and Maddie playing, it guarantees a person in the quarters. It's just really exciting tennis for America. I hope that the fans are excited, are as happy with it.

After my match, Ben and Frances were in the cool-down area, or warm-up, I don't know, area, and it was really just cool to see us all there. Obviously the conversation, they already started the trash talk. I'm indifferent who wins, but I did say that Frances is a little bit upset because I said Ben had the better outfit than him.

Yeah, because Frances told me at French Open that he had something crazy planned for US Open. I was like, You're wearing confetti (laughter). I said Carlos looked better. He's going to hate this (smiling).

Love you, Frances.

Q. Don't take this the wrong way. I'm not trying to get you into trouble or anything like that. But Brad is also known as talking incessantly. During the match did you tell him to zip it in no uncertain terms?

COCO GAUFF: It wasn't really towards him. There has been situations a couple times in the matches where Pere and Brad will both talk at the same time. I will say, Okay, stop talking because it jumbles my head.

Sometimes when I go to my towel, it's a reset moment. I don't need to hear anything. I just need to reset and think about me.

But the talking, on court he doesn't really talk like that much about on the tennis. I mean, I can't really hear him on Ashe, so sometimes I do say, I can't hear you. It's hard to hear.

Sometimes maybe you guys are hearing more than what I'm hearing. Sometimes I've heard from, like, off the camera, my parents will say, Yeah, he talks a lot. But to be honest, I can't really hear him that well.

But, yeah, I do think today I did say, Stop talking, at one point because I was getting frustrated. It wasn't really directed at him. It was just that I needed to reset on, like, my towel. When I go to my towel, sometimes it's a reset, and sometimes I just need to wipe my hands. I think in that moment, I just didn't want to hear anything. I just wanted to think about what I was doing.

Yeah, off the court he does talk, but I like it. I think any time I can get advice, it's great. They understand what it is before I went on the court or before we started this tournament. I'm like, Yeah, I might say some things like "Stop talking."

I did it in Cincinnati. They don't take any offense to it. They know sometimes I just need to not hear anything. Sometimes I'll ask them, What am I doing wrong? I don't know if the camera picks that up. Probably not. But I sometimes will say, What am I doing wrong? And that's when I want advice.

Q. You were able to hit through Caroline. She complimented your forehand. To be able to hit through an equally great defender, how does that make you feel more confident? Your thoughts on Jimmy Butler.

COCO GAUFF: He was here too again?

Q. Yes.

COCO GAUFF: Okay. The man loves tennis. He was at some of the late-night matches. He was at Ben's match, too. I don't know how he's sleeping (smiling).

Yeah, Caroline, I mean, I knew that she's probably watched a lot of my matches and knows my tendencies. I definitely was trying to be more aggressive on that wing and not letting her step in on it.

Yeah, I think it gives me a lot of confidence knowing I can hit through people. People consider me sometimes someone who plays more passive. But I definitely think this tournament I've been winning the matches off of being the aggressor. Today it showed that I can play aggressive, and I know that's probably when I play my best tennis. But it's obviously finding the balance.

I think especially in the first, all the way through the second set, until I got broken, I was finding that balance.

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