

# US OPEN

Thursday, September 7, 2023

New York, New York, USA

## Coco Gauff

### Press Conference

C. GAUFF/K. Muchova

6-4, 7-5

**THE MODERATOR:** Two tough sets, two hours and three minutes. You have had quite a run the last five or six weeks. Put this win into context for us.

**COCO GAUFF:** Yeah, it was a tough match. You know, I had leads, lost it, and, you know, serving for it. It was a lot of emotional, I guess, challenges in the match. But I think I did a good job of staying focused. I'm just really proud of myself today.

**THE MODERATOR:** Questions.

**Q. You talked about some of those emotional challenges. How challenging was it to have a 50-minute delay? You have no idea why it's going on or how long it's going to be. Just talk about the difficulty, I guess, in resetting after that.**

**COCO GAUFF:** Yeah, it was a bit challenging, because, you know, it's not like a typical delay. So we didn't know how long it was going to take. We were talking to the supervisor and security. You know, they could say it could be as quick as five minutes or as long as an hour.

It was tough to figure out if we stay warm or conserve energy. You know, after, like, 10 minutes of waiting inside I decided to change my clothes and eat a bar.

But, you know, it's life. It happens. So I just try my best to keep the momentum that I had going from winning the first set and the first game.

**Q. I watched your interview on the ESPN set talking about the Roland Garros final last year and you said you didn't believe in yourself then. Clearly you do now. Can you talk about that evolution of your self-belief?**

**COCO GAUFF:** Yeah, I think, you know, playing that match, I don't know, the whole tournament felt like a



surprise to me. I wasn't expecting the final here either, but I just think then I was really winning and just relieved that I made it to a final because so many people expected a lot of things from me. You know, I think I just didn't really believe that I had it in me, especially at the time playing Iga, who was on a winning streak and everything.

But this time around, I have been focusing more on myself and my expectations of myself. Not going on social media or listening to people who believe that I can or believe that I can't.

So I have just been really focusing on myself. I really believe that now I have the maturity and ability to do it. You know, regardless of what happens on Saturday, I'm really proud of how I have been handling the last few weeks.

**Q. Can you take us inside your head during that 40-shot rally. What's going on there when you're going through a point like that?**

**COCO GAUFF:** Yeah, I knew a long point like that was honestly in contention, it was coming, just the way that game was going. Obviously we both missed some shots, like going for it, I missed one of those match points going for a forehand winner.

I think, you know, we were both just trying our best to stay in it. At that point when you're like 20 shots in in the rally it's tough to go for a winner sometimes because, you know, you're not as fresh on energy and everything as before, and, you know, I knew that I could outlast that rally. I knew I had the legs and the lungs to outlast her in the rally; it was whether I had the mentality and patience to do it.

After 10 or 15 shots in, I was, like, Well, this is going to change the match. I knew that if I could win that rally, I felt like that next match point was going to go my way, because I don't think she could have did back-to-back rallies like that. I knew that next match point, if I were to win she was definitely going to go for a winner or miss. That's what happened (smiling).

**Q. Madison is up a set and a break and it's late in the second set. Assuming for the moment that your opponent will be Madison Keys, what do you make of the significance of the matchup, and what do you think**



**will be the keys to the match for you?**

**COCO GAUFF:** Yeah, she's a great player. She, you know, can hit winners from all areas of the court. So I think for me it's going to be focusing on my side of the court and trying my best to be aggressive when I can.

Yeah, I think that if it were an all-American matchup, it would be really cool for American tennis in general. The last time that happened was actually when she was in the final and I was in the final juniors. That would be a crazy kind of moment, full-circle moment.

Would I have ever thought that this would happen then at 13? Probably not. That would be really cool.

Obviously Maddie is an incredible person off the court. You know, I first met her when I was probably like 13, maybe even younger. It would be really cool if that were to happen.

**Q. Civil disobedience has a very important role in this country and the battle for human rights and environmental justice, right? I believe that this protest tonight was about environmental injustice. You're one who is very astute about these sorts of matters. I'm wondering how you feel about a protest like this in the semifinals of the US Open.**

**COCO GAUFF:** Yeah, I mean, I think that throughout history moments like this are definitely defining moments. I definitely, I believe, you know, in climate change. I don't really know exactly what, you know, what they were protesting. I know it was about the environment.

I 100% believe in that. I think there are things we can do better. I know the tournaments are doing things to do better for the environment. Would I prefer it not happening in my match? 100%, yeah. I'm not gonna sit here and lie (smiling). But it is what it is.

I had a feeling it was going to happen this tournament. It happened in the French Open, it happened in Wimbledon. So, you know, following the trend, it was definitely going to happen here. I just was hoping it wasn't in my match, and honestly I thought we made it through.

But it is what it is. I think that, you know, the moments like this, yeah, are history-defining moments. Like I said, I prefer it not to happen in my match but I wasn't pissed at the protesters. I know the stadium was because it just interrupted entertainment.

I always speak about preaching, you know, preaching about what you feel and what you believe in. It was done

in a peaceful way, so I can't get too mad at it. Obviously I don't want it to happen when I'm winning up 6-4, 1-0, and I wanted the momentum to keep going. But hey, if that's what they felt they needed to do to get their voices heard, I can't really get upset at it.

**Q. I remember at Wimbledon after that loss, you talked about needing to go back to the drawing board, and D.C. being in a building phase and everything like that. I don't know if that's where your head was at in the moment, but I'm wondering if two months later you feel like being in a place where you're happier with your game happened a little bit quicker than you expected it to this summer?**

**COCO GAUFF:** Oh, 100%. Yeah, definitely after Wimbledon, you know, I wasn't expecting to do well honestly in this hard court season, so I'm really proud of the way I have been able to turn this season around for me.

I think honestly when I had that at Wimbledon I was really sort of thinking for offseason and preparing for next year. You know, I still think I have a lot to improve, but yeah, 100% I wasn't thinking those results would happen.

Even after D.C., didn't think this would happen. Even after Cincy, didn't think this would happen. I'm really proud of myself, and like I said, there is still a long ways to go.

Yeah, I think I can improve a lot, but how I have been able to manage with the game I have now is something that I'm happy with.

**Q. I believe it was in the spring and maybe Madrid or Stuttgart you were talking about imposter syndrome and feeling like that was something you kind of always had regardless of your results and fame and all that. I'm curious now when you talk about believing in yourself, believing that this might be your time, how those two concepts interrelate. Have you shed that completely? Is that still a part of you? Can you talk about that.**

**COCO GAUFF:** Yeah, I think it's still a part of me. I think it's something I'm doing better with, definitely. Even after D.C., you know, I still was like, well, you know, I beat some good people but maybe I caught them on off days (smiling).

Then Cincinnati happens, obviously that win with Iga. Even when it happened, I was, like, I played great tennis, but, you know, in that moment I was, like, I caught her on an off day (smiling).

It's things like that I have to remind myself. Honestly in today's match, you know, a little bit this morning I was, like, that Cincinnati final I beat her because I felt like she wasn't physically ready to play that final because of the troubles she had. Then I told myself, I looked in the mirror, I was, like, no, you're a good player, you can beat her regardless of her physical standard. I knew she was obviously going to be in much better shape tonight with the day rest. I told myself you can do it again.

Yeah, it's still definitely a part of me but I do think I'm giving myself more credit more. And speaking things into existence is real. I've been trying to speak more positively of myself and actually telling myself that I'm a great player.

**Q. You were asked a little bit about this on the court tonight about that match in 2019 against Naomi out there. Does that feel like a lifetime ago in a lot of ways? Also, if you could go back to yourself that night, what would you say to yourself after that?**

**COCO GAUFF:** Oh, it does definitely feel like so long ago. I still see the videos from it but I don't remember what I said a lot of the times.

What would I tell myself? I think before the match I would tell myself that you put way too much pressure in that moment. I think, you know, after that it was after Wimbledon and I remember she was, I think she was defending champion, and, like, I went into that match, like, as I was supposed to be the favorite. Social media and everything was expecting so many things from me after Wimbledon.

I had to remember, I wish I had told myself just enjoy the moment and playing on Ashe. Honestly, that whole match I didn't enjoy at all, regardless if I was winning games or not. Sometimes I would get a game and I remember just being relieved that I got a game and not really embracing it.

In that moment afterwards, yeah, I wouldn't change anything about it. I think it touched many people. I tried my best to handle my emotions the best I could. Obviously she was really sweet, allowing me to be a part of that.

Yeah, I think prematch I would tell myself just to enjoy it. Yeah, three years later, I think now I'm having way more fun now than I was three years ago.

**Q. On the court you said, "Job's not done yet." Was that a Kobe reference?**

**COCO GAUFF:** Yeah. Definitely. He's, like, has an incredible mentality. One of the things is when he's up

and, you know, the finals, NBA Finals when they're up in the count or 3-1, whatever lead they have, he doesn't celebrate. He'd satisfy, give himself a pat on the back but time to move on.

So that's the mentality that I have. I'm trying to enjoy the moment but also knowing I still have more work to do.

Yes, the final is an incredible achievement but it's something that I'm not satisfied with yet.

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