

Rothesay International

Tuesday, 27 June 2023

Eastbourne, England, UK

Devonshire Park

Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/B. Pera

6-3, 6-2

THE MODERATOR: Coco, a great first win for you in Eastbourne. Pretty straightforward. Just talk us through your thoughts on the match.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, Bernarda is not an easy player, especially lefty on grass. Really, it was really windy today, so I think we were just trying to make one more ball in the court.

Yeah, overall I'm happy with today's win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. How hard did the conditions make it for you to play today?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, it was difficult. I'm from Florida, so I live close to the beach as well. So I'm used to this wind, but obviously not on the grass court thing. You know, with the grass and the wind, it can be a tricky combination.

I think the most important thing is to just stay positive. You're going to make some mistakes that you probably wouldn't normally make. That's what I was trying to do today.

Q. You've got Britain's Jodie Burrage next. What do you make of her? Have you got any off-court relationship with her?

COCO GAUFF: I never played her or practiced with her. I have seen her around the site obviously, and we say hello. I don't think we talked more than that.

But I have been following her, you know, for a while now. I saw her results last week. She made the final. I think she's feeling really confident on the grass.

Yeah, I think it's going to be a tough match either way, especially with the crowd support will probably be for her. But I'm excited to play against a Brit on grass (smiling).

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Q. I feel like in Paris we talked a lot about you dealing with disappointment, for whatever reason. You talked a little about how you kind of have a loss and leave it in the past. What did you kind of take away from that defeat against Alexandrova, and what have you brought forward and what have you worked on?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, that defeat, I mean, I learned from it. Like the scoreline was not good, but I didn't, you know, have a lot of expectations for the grass, first grass tournament, especially.

I took five days off after French Open, and I practiced twice maybe or three times on grass before my match. So I knew when I made that decision that I wasn't going to go in guns ablazing. If I did, great, but I know the first week on grass for me is always a shaky week, so I knew it was going to be tough, especially playing against her who won the title the previous week.

Yeah, but no excuses. I mean, she played great. But I think that's the mentality I think I have to have going into the rest of the grass season, not letting one win dictate how the rest of the season will go.

Q. You're playing one of our local players, Jodie Burrage, who is originally from Surrey. You have never played her before. How do you deal with someone you have never played before? What sort of preparation goes into that?

COCO GAUFF: I feel like for the first, you know, I guess now the last year I have been playing people I have played more frequently, but when I first came on tour, everybody I played was new.

I just approach it the same as any other match, try to feel her out the first couple games. You can watch millions of film, but it's never going to feel like when you play them.

Yeah, I'm just going to go out there and see what I can do. I know she's having a great grass season so far. Made her first final. I saw the final. I'm hoping that I can kind of use my experience and my momentum today from today's match into tomorrow's match.

Q. After you're done with press and everything like that, and you've done your cooldown and everything, what are you going to be eating? How are you

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relaxing later after a win?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, we have been eating at different places here at Eastbourne. We had Indian, we had Turkish. Actually, Catherine is the one who recommended me these places. I think tonight we're going to go another one of her recommendations. She's been hitting the spots.

Yeah, and then I have been trying to read a lot lately, so doing that. I have been wanting to go to the movies but I finished late today, so I don't think I'll do that. Maybe one of these days if I finish earlier.

Q. I think you went back onto the practice court, right?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah.

Q. Wonder if that was for more time on the grass or working on something specific.

COCO GAUFF: Both. I think more time on the grass and working on stuff specific, especially like a match today was super windy and I don't think either of us got much rhythm. I had the feeling that I wanted to go hit, but my coach, he approached me first, but I was going to ask him too.

Yeah, sometimes matches like that, even though I wouldn't say I played bad, it's just one of those matches with the conditions you're not going to feel ready. Tomorrow could be no wind at all and completely normal, and now I'm like, oh, I have no rhythm. I was just trying to build rhythm.

Q. If you could, if possible, would you like to see the grass season longer, expanded?

COCO GAUFF: Oh, 100% if I could. But, you know, within the WTA calendar, I wouldn't want it to make the actual whole entire season longer. But I guess this part, for sure, it's definitely the shortest season.

But, yeah, I don't even know how we would do that without expanding the year, making it even longer. I think we have a long enough season. But I guess if we could cut certain tournaments and make the grass season more, that would be pretty cool. But, yeah, I don't think I'd want the calendar to be expanded even more.

Q. Ahead of Wimbledon, feels like you're a very established player, having that young breakthrough. You're still only 19. How will you feel going there? Do you feel like a genuine contender?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I feel like, I mean, that tournament, I have made the second week almost every

time I played it. Last year I didn't. So I think I have opportunity to go further. I mean, in every slam I feel like I am a contender, but obviously I haven't got to that step of actually winning one.

But I guess Wimbledon, I mean, it's always going to be a special tournament for me considering how I started my career, I guess. So I think every time I play, I just feel a bit of buzz and excitement. I think that's what makes me excited every year to go play.

Q. Obviously Emma Raducanu had this huge breakthrough moment, perhaps wasn't fully developed in tennis terms, maybe physically either, has had some struggles since. Do you have some empathy with her and what's going on? Do you expect to see her come back strong?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, three surgeries is crazy. I've never had that experience of injuries or anything like that. Yeah, and people don't realize when you don't go from playing on the tour, it's a completely different physical level than juniors or even some of the ITF pro circuit tour.

That maybe could have played a role. I don't know like her situation, but I definitely have a lot of empathy for her. I sent her well wishes privately and publicly. I just hope to see her back on tour soon. I think she's great for the game and a good person behind what you guys see (smiling).

Q. Jodie told us yesterday she was really excited to play a player of your stature, which is mental to think that she's five years older than you. But you're here sort of ranked in the top 5 in the world. How does that feel? As a 19-year-old, to be sort of labeled as someone of such a high stature at such a young age?

COCO GAUFF: I don't really think about it, to be honest. I would say I'm the type of person, people always say I need to tell myself that I should be proud of myself and be more positive about myself, so it is something that I am working on.

But it's not something I think about. Even I talked to a friend the other day on FaceTime. He's like, Everything you told me last year, all your goals that you told me you wanted to do last year, you're doing this year right now.

I'm was like, Oh, wait. I didn't even realize that.

I think it's just a reminder, trying to remind myself that I am doing well. Obviously I want to do better. For her to consider that to me is very sweet of her.

But I think, you know, tennis is just one of those sports it doesn't matter the ranking. All that matters is how you

play that day. That's why I love this sport, that anyone can win on any day.

Sure, in other sports too. I think it's much harder, because tennis is one of those things that if you're playing a team sport, you can sub some people in and not maybe guarantee not all five or ten players are going to have a bad day that day, but tennis is one of those sports you can have a bad day and there's nothing you can do about it.

That's what I love about it, because I think everyone has equal chance to win on every single day.

Q. I think you got your driving license at the end of last year, right?

COCO GAUFF: Yes.

Q. When you go back home like after French Open, how much do you actually get to drive?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I drive quite a bit, because I practice 30 minutes away. I drive to practice and Chick-fil-A, Chipotle. That's really the main reason I like to drive my car.

Then my brother loves it because I'll take him to stuff, to the movies. My other brother, 15 right now, he's in the face that I don't exist when his friends are around (smiling). But then when they're not around, he wants me to take him places. Funny how that works.

The youngest one, me and him, we go on some trips to the movies or ice cream or breakfast and stuff like that. First I used to say I would not want to drive at all. I think I got driving anxiety. But now I'm just like cruising, I love my car, it goes fast. Haven't gotten any tickets yet. We'll see. (Laughter.) I just love it.

Q. You're in the doubles with Jessica Pegula. How's that been? Looked like you had so much fun out there yesterday.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, yesterday I had a lot of fun. I think it really set up how I felt about today. Last week it was a tough week and also new beginnings with a new coach. My dad went home to be with my brother. He has a big baseball tournament going on. So this is very unfamiliar territory for me.

So the doubles kind of helped me I guess feel like this is going to be a good week and start the week off strong. I'm glad I got to play with Jess. She's always a great spirit and person to play with.

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