

Rothesay International

Thursday, 29 June 2023

Eastbourne, England, UK

Devonshire Park

Coco Gauff

Press Conference

C. GAUFF/J. Pegula

6-3, 6-3

THE MODERATOR: Coco, obviously always tough to play a good friend. Just talk us through your thoughts on the match and how well you played today.

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I thought I played well. It's a great win for me regardless of our relationship off the court. Obviously we both have a lot of respect for each other, and I'm just happy to get through today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. We're obviously guaranteed an American player in the final now. How determined are you it's going to be you?

COCO GAUFF: I mean, really determined. The flag doesn't add any other pressure. Yeah, and it's great that women's tennis in our country is doing well and the men are doing well too. I think it's an exciting time to be a player from the U.S. playing and also being a fan.

Q. You obviously burst onto the scene in Wimbledon in 2019. This might be a bit of a difficult one, but can you tell us sort of how you have changed as a player since then, how you have improved?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think I'm trying to be more aggressive, and I think I feel a little bit more pressure now. I mean, obviously the more established you become, the more people expect from you. Sometimes I do try to take myself back to that mindset I had when I was 15.

Yeah, it's really about balance. I think you kind of have to know you're going to do well but don't expect too much where you, I guess, crumble under the pressure.

Q. I think you said earlier this week you go into every Grand Slam feeling like you are a contender. Do you feel like a Grand Slam title is on its way sooner rather than later for you?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I mean, I hope so (smiling). That

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would be the greatest thing. But, I mean, I don't know how my career will pan out, but I do think that I'm giving myself the best opportunity and the best chance with the day-by-day work that I'm doing. That's all I can control.

Obviously when I get on the court, I'll try my best, but I feel like I'm on the pathway to getting one soon.

Q. Two areas that I think most of us felt needed a bit of work over the last year were serve and forehand. Your serve has got a lot better. Are those the areas that you are working on? How do you feel the progress is going with those two shots?

COCO GAUFF: Yeah, I think I'm getting a lot better with that. Obviously this tournament I have been serving really well. I have been trying to work on my serve and playing it smarter, being more first serves in the court.

And then obviously the forehand, it's going to be a long process, but I do think the last couple of matches it's been helping me a lot, especially on the return. I had a lot of second-serve return, like not winners but deep return, aggressive returns on that side.

So yeah, I think it's something that will continue to improve. It's tough to fix everything, you know, in between tournaments, but I do think tactical ways in how I'm approaching it in the matches are getting better and better.

Q. Are you sensing that players are serving a little less to your forehand and varying it up because they might get a big forehand back?

COCO GAUFF: Yes and no. I mean, I know where they're going to serve, so it's a plus for me because I kind of know where they're going to go. Obviously it is my weaker shot. I mean, that's not a secret.

But I do think the more they serve there, I mean, with anything, the more reps you do, the better you get. I do think at this point I don't think about it on the return especially. Now it's just, you know, Make the return. It's not, Oh, my forehand return needs... No. So it's none of that.

I hit a lot of forehand returns today, and I think my forehand return is the reason why I was able to break today.

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Q. Great match today.

COCO GAUFF: Thank you.

Q. Caroline Wozniacki has said that she is planning to come out of retirement.

COCO GAUFF: Oh, she is?

Q. Yeah.

COCO GAUFF: Oh, I didn't know that. This is my first time hearing it.

THE MODERATOR: I think it got announced while you were playing.

COCO GAUFF: Oh, okay. Wow. Sorry, I wasn't expecting that. Okay. Go ahead.

Q. She's thinking, she says, about playing Canadian Open first, and she's got her eye on the US Open. She's 32 years old. She's got two kids. How would you feel about facing her at the US Open?

COCO GAUFF: Oh, it would be a great opportunity. I mean, she's a great champion, one of the best to play the game.

I don't know how I would handle that. I mean, it will be a hyped-up match, for sure. But I haven't looked that far ahead.

Yeah, I never thought -- honestly, out of all the players that retired, I never thought it would be her, but I'm happy for her. I always see her at the sites, and sometimes I see her hitting. I have always said she could still play on tour with how fit she is.

She still looks like she's pretty much on tour when she's practicing in between the commentating she was doing. I guess she probably recognized what everybody was thinking and decided to come back.

But it will be pretty cool, and especially for the moms. Not too many -- a lot of the girls or women on tour usually have one, and for her to have two is another effort. Her husband is obviously an incredible athlete too. I think they'll be a good support for each other during this time. It would be pretty cool to play her, to be honest.

Q. Have you ever hung out with her? She lives in Florida, doesn't she?

COCO GAUFF: Yes. I've never hung out with her. You know, there is a bit of an age gap for me to hang out with her. (Laughter.)

No, I have spoken to her quite a few times off the court, mainly at the tournaments. I had the great opportunity to have a long conversation with her dad when I was 14 or 15, and he was kind of helping my dad and I with the dad/coach dynamic.

Caroline has always been super sweet to me. She's always been one of my favorite players to watch on and off the court.

But yeah, I have never hung out with her (smiling).

Q. Could you say something about the dad/coach dynamic? Must be moments where you want a hug rather than an analysis?

COCO GAUFF: Yes, it is something that has been a struggle with that part, which is why I added another coach.

Yeah, I think Pere right now -- my dad isn't here. I think really the only thing, my dad is very good with numbers and stats and breaking down reports, so I do ask him, he doesn't really do anything on the tennis side anymore. You know, he will maybe give me advice, but he gives me scouting reports.

That's the thing I continue to ask him for, because I think he's one of the few that can break it down. We don't even talk on the phone. He sends it like a text message, and he breaks it down really well for me.

Obviously, you know, Pere, he does it really well too, but it's our third day or third match, so I'm sure we will figure out how we like to do it. But I do like the way my dad sets up scouting reports, so I will continue to go to him for that. But everything else, he'll probably talk to whatever coach is at the time and maybe give his advice, but I think for our relationship, it will work better more like this.

And especially with my two younger brothers, I told him it's better if he spends more time at home with them. Now that I'm older, I don't think I need him as much as they do. But I am very grateful that my dad made it a point to travel with me at every tournament, because there is a lot that people don't see, and I think he definitely protected me from a lot, now looking back at it.

Q. Will he be at Wimbledon?

COCO GAUFF: Yes, he will be at Wimbledon. Both my parents will be there. Yeah, he'll be there.

Q. Obviously the Wimbledon draw tomorrow. You have got other things on your mind because you're playing here. How exciting is it on the day of a Grand Slam draw?

COCO GAUFF: Not that exciting. Not that exciting, honestly. I mean, I'm not the one that's waiting for the draw to come out. Some players are.

Yeah, it's not that exciting to me, to be honest. (Laughter.) But I know the fans love it because they do all the matchups that could potentially happen.

For us, for me as a player, I don't look ahead. I focus on the first round and then round by round. In order to get to the quarters, you have to win some matches before, so I try not to look too far ahead.

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