

Miami Open presented by Itaú

Thursday, March 21, 2019

Cori Gauff

Press Conference



C. GAUFF/C. McNally

3-6, 6-3, 6-4

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. What were some of the emotions on court today, getting your first WTA win?

CORI GAUFF: I really tried to minimize the moment and just tried to think of it as practice. I know that may sound bad, but it kind of helped me. I just kind of put myself in a mindset that, you know, if I don't stay positive and if I don't go for my shots, then I'm going to lose. So I just went for it and it ended up helping me in the end.

Q. You could have played anyone in the draw, but having a familiar opponent, did that help keep things grounded for you?

CORI GAUFF: Yeah, definitely. I played her twice before this, and they were both in juniors. You know, this is a whole different thing for me, but I kind of, again, tried to minimize the moment.

It kind of helped, obviously, because I knew her tendencies, but also I think it helps her, like, we both kind of had advantage because know each other's games very well.

I think that anyone could have won today, and I think the match just was really decided by two or three points.

Q. Do you think you might feel differently in a day or two looking back on this moment, or is it still just about keeping things normal at this point of the tournament?

CORI GAUFF: Well, I still don't believe that I won (smiling). After the match, I served for the match and I was, like, Do I have to return again, or do we shake hands? I didn't really think it was over.

This is a dream, like, I have been dreaming of this moment for years, just playing in the Miami Open. And I have been coming to this tournament since I was eight or nine years old. Watching the players here and actually being in the same tournament, being in the same area as players that I've watched since practically I was born, it's so surreal to me.

Q. It looked like at the end you did a good job playing high ball and stepping in. (Off microphone.)

CORI GAUFF: I think I was just trying to make her play balls and not make mistakes, because I know if I'm tight, then I know she's nervous, as well.

So I just tried to make her play balls. I know she likes to come to the net, so instead of trying to go for a big passing shot, I was trying to make her prove -- I know she has good hands, because I've played doubles with her, but just trying to make her prove that she has good hands, if that makes sense, just trying to make her play volleys.

I know she's going to make the volley, but you never know, you get lucky. She had unreal hands, unreal hands the whole match. I think she won more net points than she lost, for sure. You know, you never know. You get lucky, she misses a volley at the right time, you never know.

Q. What gives you the greatest joy about playing and about your career?

CORI GAUFF: Just having fun. Like, these matches, these close matches really makes it fun, whether you win or lose. I know I gave it my all. I know I gave myself the best chance to win.

My dad always used to tell me to control the controllables. I can't really control how I play -- like, I can control how I want to play and what tactics I want. I never know if I'm going to miss or make a shot. Obviously there are shots I'm supposed to make, but you never know.

I just tried to control my attitude. I think if I -- I didn't get frustrated. Well, I obviously got frustrated but I didn't show that I got frustrated at all in the match. I think at the end that helped. She didn't show that she got frustrated. I think we were, just, like, we both looked like we had been on tour for years. I think that we both showed good attitude today.

Q. I saw your Tennis Channel interview. You said you practiced a lot this week with different players, good players, and you also did practice matches.

CORI GAUFF: Yeah.

Q. Could you tell with who you played with in training? And how far are you away from these players?

CORI GAUFF: I played this week with Monica Puig. I'm trying to think. My mind is at a blank. Sasnovich, Petkovic. I think that's it. Yeah. I think that's it.

It kind of -- I thought I was going to get blown out. These are top 20, top 30, former top 20 players. I was actually able to level up to them, and that kind of gave me confidence, knowing that I'm young and they have been on tour for years. They're not blowing me off the court, so that helped.

Q. Did they give you a bit of feedback, or did you talk to them during the training?

CORI GAUFF: Yeah. I forgot to mention Alison Riske. And after playing with her, she's, like, You're going to go far. You have a great game. You go for your shots.

Monica Puig was also very nice. All the players gave me great feedback, actually, at the end of the practice. They all told me that you're going to do big things in this tournament.

I hit with Kyrgios this week. We didn't play a practice match, obviously, because I would have lost. But I hit with him, and he told me that you're going to go far in this tournament. I was, like, All right, that's basic. He's, like, No, you're really going to go far. I was, like, Okay.

Q. How far you think you can go? I think you play Kasatkina next?

CORI GAUFF: Yeah. My goal for every tournament is to win the tournament. I don't want to say I will just win this next match and be done. My goal is to win the tournament. I'm going to keep that goal there and just keep fighting for it.

Q. What do you know about your next-round opponent? Have you seen her play? Have you talked to her ever?

CORI GAUFF: I have never met her before, but obviously I have seen her play a lot. Like, I have seen everyone, basically, in this tournament on TV a lot or in person.

I'm just excited to play. She's the 14th seed, I believe, and I will see how my improvement has been going, playing against someone ranked as high as her and who has also had a couple good breaks in Grand Slams.

Q. You mentioned on the Tennis Channel that you watch a lot of Tennis Channel. Do you watch a lot of tennis when you're not practicing or playing

matches?

CORI GAUFF: Yeah, I try to. I think I can get better at that, but I tried -- but lately I have been trying to watch and see what players do. Obviously I like seeing the women play, but I really like watching the men play, because I try to serve big.

So I kind of try to see how they place their serves, what patterns they go to when it's 30-All or deuce. Yeah, I love watching Tennis Channel. Tennis Channel is always on in my house. It's kind of weird seeing the players saying hi to me that I have been watching on TV for a long time.

Q. When you dreamt about playing this tournament, you probably didn't dream specifically about playing here, the Hard Rock Stadium. What did you make of this new venue? And what do you make of this experience, as well?

CORI GAUFF: Well, I'm kind of familiar just watching. My dad took us to Dolphins games and Hurricanes games, so I kind of knew how it was.

Obviously it's so weird seeing tennis courts, because, Oh, my God, this is concrete. This was a grass parking lot.

So it's kind of weird. But, like, I never was able to go, like, down here behind the scenes, and I think we are in the Dolphins locker room, women's locker room, pretty sure, and it's pretty nice.

Q. (Question off microphone.)

CORI GAUFF: Well, training-wise, just working on trusting my serve, like, you know, sometimes I'll miss a serve or double fault, and I try to not -- I used to, like, make it so big and then I end up double faulting two or three times in a row.

But now I just kind of go for your serve, because I actually serve better when I go for it, and grass when I try to roll it in. Also, it gives them pressure to make a play off of a big serve, which is hard to do.

So the most important thing I have been working on is staying positive. In practice we have been working on my routines, going through my towels. My coach, Robby, he would, at the end of practice, if I'm returning, he'd be, like, 5-All, 30-All, what are you going to do?

When we first started, I used to just rush up to the line, but now I take my time and, you know, say positive things to myself before the return. I think that definitely came big today when I was down 4-2, she had those couple game points, and I think I just needed to kind of trust myself, and I just kept telling myself that you can get back into this match. Just stay positive. Yeah.

Q. Any movies or TV shows you have been binge watching lately?

CORI GAUFF: I saw Captain Marvel, and that was pretty good. I love Marvel. I love Avengers, super heroes, all that.

That was a nice, good movie, and it kind of made a lot of sense. Also, I watched Luke Cage, but they canceled the third season, I believe, but that was a good show, like, Flash. Any super hero show, that's what I'm watching.

Q. Do you like the rise of more female super hero movies?

CORI GAUFF: Yeah, definitely. Captain Marvel, I really liked that movie. It was funny. It was, like, it was a plot twist. I don't know if you guys saw it. I don't want to spoil it if you guys want to see it. I don't know. But you should go see it. It's definitely worth seeing.

I don't really have a favorite Marvel movie, but I think all their movies are great. I'm excited to see the Endgame, which is a new one coming out. I don't know if you guys follow Marvel.