

2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Quotes
No. 17 Mississippi State vs. Jackson State – December 14, 2022

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Opening Statement

CJ: “First off, I want to give my condolences to the Leach family. Obviously, it has been some tough days for Bulldog nation and our community. He was so revered and loved. I wasn’t here long enough to get to know him to the level I would have liked to, but the time I did spend with him was incredible. I always appreciate the conversations that we had with Coach Leach. We talked a lot about him leading up to the game last couple of days. Obviously, we had to get our minds right to play the game, but he’s been on our minds.”

Q: How did you feel about the team's performance tonight?

CJ: “It wasn’t the start that we wanted. We thought they would play really well. They were excited. [Jackson State] Coach [Mo] Williams and I talked at shootaround today, and he was frank with me. He told me they were focused and excited to play. They showed it. They deserved a lot of credit, and they were well prepared. He had his team prepared with a really good game plan, and they executed it for the most part.”

“We had to start over in the middle of the game and make major adjustments that we haven’t made all year long. Some of them were things we never practiced. Fortunately, they helped us. At the end of the day, you got to win the game and figure out how to win the game. This will be something we will learn from and will grow from. This will be really good for us because of how exposed we got. They did some things that really exposed our defense, and we will have to figure out how to get better.”

Q: How much has Cameron Matthews' game expanded since you've been here?

CJ: “I don’t know his game like I know it now. I watched a handful of games prior to coming here, and I told everyone that I felt he would transition to our schemes and what was important to us really easily. I’m not right very often, but I was right about that one. He’s a big part of who we are. What you don’t see is the huddles, the practices and his daily mindset. What you do see is the athleticism, the big blocks, the dunks and the defense. He’s going to make plenty of shots for us, and he’s really working on it. It’s going to be a great opportunity for him and for us if they continue to guard him like that. He will be able to make baskets. He does so much for us, not just in the stat sheet, but behind the scenes.”

Q: How do you think the fan turnout impacted the game tonight?

CJ: “First of all, I thought it was awesome. I wasn’t expecting that. I have played in this building before, and I remember what the crowd was like that night. Even when the game started, I don’t normally really take it all in, but I’ll glance to get a feel. Then, at some point in the middle of the first half, my vision caught the crowd and I was like, ‘Wow, it really filled in.’ I was pleasantly surprised by how many people were there.”

“Unfortunately, we didn’t give them much to cheer about in the first half, but they definitely helped us down the stretch. We had some runs, we got some steals and we got some runouts. You could feel the energy in the building pick up; it definitely helped us down the stretch.”

Q: Keshawn [Murphy] gave you good minutes off the bench, what are you seeing from him right now?

CJ: "It's just a matter of when, not a matter of if. He's got so much ability. He's as natural of a scorer as we have, in terms of the feel that he has on the offensive end. That part, he's got that down. Certainly, he's got to do it in the rhythm of our offense and what we're trying to do. But once it clicks for him on the defensive end, the rebounding and being assignment-correct, he's going to be an unbelievable player."

"I think he was a little surprised when I called his name, but we needed a spark. Now, when you shoot the first time you touch the ball, the old-school coaches would tell you it's not the time to shoot it. Trust me, that was going through my brain. But it's one of those shots if you take, you better make it, and he did. That rainbow three happened. He scored a couple other baskets and had a couple nice passes. He was a big spark for us in the first half and allowed us to get that lead going into halftime."

Q: What's stood out to you the most in the first ten games of the season?

CJ: "I just think the willingness of all the players to buy in at a high level of what we're trying to sell them, if you will—the schemes, the approach and the standard. We have bad days, bad practices and bad segments. But by and large they've been on the same page. They're trying, and they want to win. We sold them a vision. Obviously, when you start winning, that gives them confidence and more belief. Hopefully, that will continue, but that's what sticks out the most."

Forward D.J. Jeffries and Guard Eric Reed Jr.

Q: You guys were really close in that ballgame, but you outscored them 17-6 down the stretch there. What do think was the difference to give you that length late in the ballgame.

DJJ: "We started getting more stops, and we started making more shots. We started to do the little things to win the game like rebounding and defending. Honestly, our defense and us making shots changed the game."

Q: Eric, you hit some big shots down the stretch. How did it feel to close this one out?

ER: "It felt good. But personally, I feel like it shouldn't have been that close. However, we pulled through and fought through some adversity to come out with the win."

Q: Can you walk us through the last 48 hours after the death of Coach Mike Leach? How did the players handle that?

DJJ: "It's hard because death is hard. It came unexpectedly. So, it's hard for a lot of people. Mississippi State is grieving right now. I feel sorry for the whole football team, everybody that knew Mike Leach and everybody that he impacted. We tried to do something tonight positive for him, to have something for the community to smile about. Death is hard. We tried to give them something positive tonight, but we know we can't change the outcome of what happened."

Q: DJ, you played in this game last year in Jackson. What do you think of the atmosphere of the game against Jackson State.

DJJ: "It was a great atmosphere, our fans showed up. They came here, and they helped us out. Without them, we would probably would have been in a hell hole. They helped us and gave us some energy. They helped us fight out this win. Without them, we probably wouldn't have done what we did. I'm thankful for them, and that we got the win."