

2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Quotes

Mississippi State vs. Utah – November 23, 2022 [Fort Myers Tip Off]

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: Talk about Dashawn Davis' performance tonight. Was there any one particular thing about their game plan that gave your team difficulties?

CJ: "He's playing on a hobbled ankle. He hasn't practiced since before the first game. He sprained his ankle in the second half on our opening night [against Texas A&M-Corpus Christi]. He played five minutes in our third game [against Arkansas-Pine Bluff and didn't suit up in our fourth game [against South Dakota]."

"We tried to get him as close to 100 percent as we could coming into this tournament. If you watch him, he hobbled around and wasn't nearly as explosive as he normally is. He wasn't getting into the paint. He made some shots obviously. He has been really gutty and made some shots when we needed them. We don't play as many games in the coming weeks. So, we're hoping to get him healthy. We can't have him lingering [with the ankle injury]."

"Their game plan was obvious from the jump. We figured that they would dare us to shoot it and pack it in. They certainly didn't disappoint. The longer the game went, the more they packed it in. They didn't have to play zone with such a sagging man-to-man defense. We were struggling to try and find a way to get down there. They were surrounding Tolu [Smith]."

"I told my staff that we're going to have to make some three's to win. Someone is going to have to make a three. We just committed to it. We got Rams [Dashawn Davis] some shots. Fortunately for us, he knocked them down."

Q: You talked Monday night about your offense being a work in progress. Talk about your team grinding out an ugly win when shots weren't falling for you.

CJ: "I've been around a lot of different programs where we relied on defense and rebounding, and we eked out wins. They were ugly wins and not aesthetically pleasing. If you do this long enough, it happens. People will text me and say that we'll take it either way. 'Ugly win coach.' I say 'You bet, and I love it.'"

"I told our fans on the radio that you may not love it all the time, but that's how you've got to win college basketball games sometimes. It's not pretty, and you've got to take them when you can get them. We were out of rhythm. We're a work in progress, and they had a lot to do with it. A lot of our three's were wide open though. We missed 50 shots. We missed 50 shots in a game, but the best part about it is that we won."

Q: What do you feel your team's shot weren't falling even in the paint?

CJ: "I don't know, I'm going to have to go back and watch some film. We talked about it at halftime that we're going to have to find a way to stick it in the square. They weren't as big as us, and it wasn't like they had a bunch of shot blockers."

"I feel like we got it down there, and we just rushed it. We didn't gather ourselves. I'm used to guys being able to put that ball in the hole, but it's easy when we're watching from the sideline or watching from afar. I believe it becomes contagious too – good and bad. Sometimes, when the ball goes in, it becomes rhythm and takes the lid off. When it doesn't, it just bleeds through your team. Today was a classic case of that in my opinion."

Q: Talk about the team's defensive first mentality, and how your team was able to showcase that in these two games.

CJ: "Absolutely, we've built this team with that mentality and that approach. It's the old cliché, right? Defense usually travels on a bus or on a plane. I've believed in that my whole career. I've seen it happen so many times in my life."

"Certainly, we want to play better on offense. I've got to do a better job of putting them in better positions. Sometimes, the offense struggles. If you can rely on defense to get you through a tough half and tough games, you can still find a way to win. If you would have told me before the season that we would be 6-0, I would take it regardless of how it looked or the margin of victory. We're looking forward to going home, having Thanksgiving and taking a few days off."

Guard Dashawn Davis and Forward Tolu Smith

Q: Tolu, talk about your teammate Dashawn knocking down some big shots tonight when your team needed it the most.

TS: "Dashawn Davis is the MVP [most valuable player] of the night. I don't care what anyone says. I'm proud of him, and I'm proud of the shots he made. I kept telling him that he was in a rhythm and to keep shooting it. He kept making it. We needed that uplifting [energy] and the tempo he brought to the game."

Q: How did your team find a way to win without a good offensive performance?

DD: "We stuck together. We played tough, and we played together on defense. We didn't give up, and we kept going."

Q: Do you feel that defense going to be your identity all season?

DD: "We're definitely a defense first team, hard-nosed and playing tough all the time."

Q: Was there a moment in the second half where you felt things clicked?

TS: "There was one time that I felt like we came together. Coach Jans gave us a good pep talk. We needed it. After that, we just came out with a spark."

Q: What is your strategy when you're get pressured from all over the court?

TS: "Like Coach [Jans] said, our offense is a work in progress. Our inside-out game is pretty successful. I've got to do a better job of not turning the ball over. I've got to see the right reads. I'm going to get double-teamed a lot this year. So, I'm trying to figure out ways to help my team win and give the ball to shooters."