

## **Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**

### **Mississippi State vs. Colorado State – December 11, 2021**

#### **Mississippi State Head Coach Ben Howland**

##### ***Opening Statement***

**BH:** "That was a very tough and hard-fought loss against a very good Colorado State team. I'm disappointed, needless to say. To be up eight in the last six minutes, I think it was 57-49, then struggle offensively and defensively down the stretch to close them out. Colorado State is one of the best offensive teams in the country. Overall, I thought we did a good job keeping them under their average, but they still ended up shooting 47 percent for the game and 42 percent from three-point range."

"I think the problem for us in the second half late in the game was our struggle to make baskets. We were great from the foul line and went 14-for-15 on the game ... but we had a couple of really bad missteps down the stretch. At one point, they had a wide-open man in the left corner because we had two men guarding the same guy. We didn't communicate properly and got beat by a wide-open shot that helped whittle that eight-point lead back down."

##### ***Q: Is there any kind of update on Tolu and when he may be back?***

**BH:** "It will likely be a couple of weeks. I don't expect him to be back playing with us in the games leading up to Christmas. I expect him to be out the next few weeks. We'll re-evaluate after those games are done. This kind of injury takes a while to heal. He had been trying to play on it valiantly. He couldn't move well enough to be effective out there on either end of the floor. Now, he's in a boot. Hopefully, his inactivity will allow it to heal better so he can be back right after Christmas break. That's what I'm guessing."

##### ***Q: You alluded to the 17-2 run Colorado made in your opening statement. What shifted out there on the court to allow that?***

**BH:** "Number one, our defense, we got a little tired down the stretch. I stuck with the guys that were already in there, and they [Colorado State] made some tough shots. [David] Roddy went to work for them down low. He's a very good player and ended up with 19 points. He earned all of them going 8-for-11 from the field and 1-for-2 from three. Offensively is where we really struggled. We struggled to score, and we struggled to get it inside. We've got to get better at that, especially down the stretch, in games."

##### ***Q: Some of the struggling to score inside, is that a side effect of not having Tolu in the lineup?***

**BH:** "That's some of it. Obviously, Tolu is one of our best players. It's been really disappointing for him and for our team given everything that he has had to contend with these different injuries. In his first game back against Louisville, he really trying to figure it out after not playing for two and a half months only having four or five practices under his belt."

"Then, he hurt his foot, the non-surgically repaired one, playing against Richmond. He has a fracture of his pinkie toe on his right foot. It's a hard injury because it's very painful. It's very similar to what Aaron Rodgers has right now in Green Bay. He played a couple of games on it. You try to put a couple of things in the shoe to alleviate it, but it's not going to hurt any worse while playing on it. It doesn't slow down the healing either. He was struggling to move at the end of the Minnesota game. He wanted to fight through it, but it was bothering him even then the last seven minutes of that game."

**Q: *You guys led for 32 minutes today. What's the message to the team after a game?***

**BH:** "It's very frustrating because we had a lot of positives. I thought Shakeel Moore played very well and helped us with some big shots and had three steals. I thought JD [Javian Davis] played well for us as well. He was 7-for-8 from the foul line. That's something that has plagued him in his career, and I think he's finally figured that out. He had 13 big points for us. There were some very good positives out of some of our guys. We're just very frustrated that we weren't able to close it out at the end of the game. Credit also goes to Colorado State. They are a very good team which is why they're ranked 25th in the NET rankings."

**Q: *Were you happy with the looks your team got to close the game?***

**BH:** "I thought the one out of bounds play for Iverson was the best of the three that we got. I thought Shak's [Shakeel Moore's] was OK. The last one that Iverson missed was defended pretty well when they missed the one-and-one down there to give us one more look at it."

**Forward Javian Davis**

**Q: *You guys had two games in a row against quality teams where you had a chance to win. How frustrating is it to not come away with the win?***

**JD:** "It's a very hard pill to swallow. Those were two games we really wanted and needed to win. They would have been big games. Both of them came down to the last possession of the game, which made them especially tough losses to go through."

**Q: *Coach Howland talked about your team's inability to convert late in the game. What do you think contributed to that struggle?***

**JD:** "We were up by eight with six minutes left in the game. We sped up too much towards the end. We should have milked the clock, taken better shots and defended better. Instead, we tried to play too fast, and it definitely hurt us a bit."

**Q: *How tough is it as a team to see Tolu Smith sidelined again with an injury?***

**JD:** "It's very tough. We need him because he's one of our best players. At the end of the day, it's next man up. We have to come together as a team, while being there for him and winning games while he is out."

**Q: *Along with that, your role becomes more important now that Tolu is out. How do you plan on attacking things during this next stretch?***

**JD:** "I've just got to be myself and stay true to myself. I'm going to continue to put in the work, regardless of whether he's in or out of the lineup. I've just got to play hard, be more aggressive and give this team a boost. I need to step up and be a leader to help this team the best I can."

**Q: *Your free throw shooting has improved lately. How much did you work on that during the off-season?***

**JD:** "I worked on that a lot during the offseason. That was one of my two biggest priorities to get better. After the 3-for-13 start, I've gone 16 for my last 20. That's my main focus, just being better on the line. I know I play hard and play aggressive which means I get to the line a lot. Because of that, I've focused on knocking those shots down when the time arrives like I have the past three or four games."