

## **2021-22 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**

### **Mississippi State at South Carolina – February 23, 2022**

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

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

**BH:** “I thought tonight was a tough defeat. They took it to us physically right from the get-go. We knew they were going to come out, be in pressure and be in denial of things, which they did. They switched defenses on us early and in the middle of possessions which our guys didn’t pick up well enough on. We didn’t attack well enough either. We didn’t attack the zone or their man defense well tonight. They were a step quicker than us, and we were poor defensively. We didn’t defend well especially in the first half.”

“[Jermaine] Couisnard played really well. He just started starting again for them three games ago, this being the fourth. He played exactly how we thought he would play this year, like an all-league player. We really looked like we were out on our heels a lot of the time against their pressure and physicality. I didn’t think about it until after the game, but we just played our fourth game in eight days. That’s hard for anybody, much less college kids. So, it was a grueling grind that may have had a cumulative effect on the game tonight.”

##### ***Q: South Carolina owned the boards tonight after you guys did at home in your first matchup. What made the difference?***

**BH:** “We missed so many shots. We were 0-for-14 from three with 34 [total] misses tonight. There were a lot of missed shots, and they had inside defensive position like the defense usually does. We’ve got to shoot the ball well. I don’t know if I’ve ever coached a game where my team has not made a three. That’s a first. I’m pretty sure that’s the first here [at Mississippi State]. They also had nine offensive rebounds in the first half. We were not blocking out. One time, Andersson Garcia switched onto [Devin] Carter and got boxed out. We typically do a good job on the glass – it’s frustrating.”

##### ***Q: Where does a loss like this leave your NCAA tournament hopes?***

**BH:** “I think we’re going to have to win the SEC Tournament to get in at this point. It’s no doubt for me. This was a must-win game to keep that hope of an at-large bid alive. Even if we [win out], they go on how many Quad One wins you have. Maybe, if we got to the finals and lost, we might get lucky, but right now in my mind we have to win the conference tournament.”

##### ***Q: How capable is your team to make a run like that?***

**BH:** “Honestly, I’m not even thinking about that right now. I’m just focused on getting the win against Vanderbilt. They’re going to be very difficult to beat. It’s the best Vanderbilt team we’ve played against since my second year. They’re playing really well. They’ve got a preseason player of the year in Scotty Pippen Jr., a really good big in Liam Robbins, and they can shoot the basketball. They made 28 three-pointers in our two meetings last year. We’ve got our hands full and just have to worry about that.”

##### ***Q: How hard is it to prepare for playing against multiple defenses in the same game?***

**BH:** “We hadn’t seen them go zone in the middle of a possession like they did multiple times in the first half. Other than that, we prepared for their press. We can’t simulate their man because they’re so pressed out. That’s how they normally play their defense. They were much better tonight than they were in their last game against us. A lot of that is confidence; they are playing well and have won four in a row now.”

“Their defense is what starts their offense. They executed well offensively with hard screens and hard cuts. We were just a step behind tonight. I hope it was because we were playing our fourth game in eight days, and that it’s just not something we’re used to. There’s no question, if we had Tolu [Smith] the entire time, we would be completely different because Garrison [Brooks] would have never had to play minutes as a five. He’s still trying to figure out how to play the four defensively. He got challenged a couple of times tonight. There’s no question, I’ve thought about it before.”

***Q: What was it in South Carolina’s defense that forced Iverson Molinar to have an off game?***

**BH:** “I’m having to play him too many minutes. He had a wide-open shot at the top of the key to cut it to nine with about four minutes to play that wasn’t even close because he’s playing 37 minutes. He’s getting so little rest. I put Cam Carter in the starting lineup, and he was really off-balance to start the game. I like playing Iverson for around 34 minutes. Part of it for Iverson is the minutes wearing on him. Four games in eight days is a grueling deal. We’re not going to live practice tomorrow, but the practice on Friday is going to be an hour and fifteen minutes because we need fight and energy for Saturday.”

***Q: This was MSU’s first game since 2011-12 without a three-pointer. What needs to be done to improve your team’s three-point shooting?***

**BH:** “We have not shot the ball well in the last nine or 10 games. We’ve had some open looks. We just need to have confidence and put the ball in. It’s not like we didn’t have some good looks. Iverson [Molinar] and Cam [Carter] had wide open looks at the top of the key. I thought Shak [Shakeel More] and D.J. [Jeffries] had some good looks as well. When you’re wide open, there’s a good chance you should make the three. I’m really disappointed we didn’t get one to go down out of 14 attempts.”

### **Forward Tolu Smith**

***Q: What was the difference on the boards tonight?***

**TS:** “It was just about who wanted it better. We were both 7-7 [in conference play] coming into the game. They just fought harder than us, it’s plain and simple. I take a lot of blame for that. I didn’t do a good job of rebounding.”

***Q: How difficult is this game to stomach given that both teams were on the bubble?***

**TS:** “It’s tough; everyone knows we’re trying to get to the [NCAA] Tournament. They had the same mentality as us. At the end of the day, we just have to move on to the next one and never quit. That’s all that it is.”

***Q: What factored into the loss?***

**TS:** “They fought harder than us. There was nothing wrong before the game. The coaches did a phenomenal job of scouting before the game. At the end of the day, it came down to us playing the game. I take a lot of responsibility as a leader, and as a big man who has to rebound. At the end of the day, I have to rebound. It’s a huge factor in these games.”

***Q: How difficult is it to prepare for playing against multiple defenses in the same game?***

**TS:** “Once we saw it a couple of times, we adjusted to it. It’s similar to how when we played at Ole Miss, they adjusted to our offense very quickly. We’ve just got to do a better job about adjusting faster. Sometimes, we ran a man set against a zone. That’s on us. We should’ve recognized it earlier and made a different action. They threw a lot of schemes at us, and we needed to do a better job of communicating with each other.”

***Q: What do you feel like the inside guys can do to create better looks on the outside for your guards?***

**TS:** "I'm not discouraged by our shooting percentage. I know every guard we have is a great shooter. Tonight, was just about the boards. We're going to have tough shooting nights. We've just got to continue to do our best to contribute to the game. It's just a part of it. At the end of the day, it came down to toughness and rebounding. It was a part of our loss, but it wasn't the main factor.