

2021-22 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. Florida – January 19, 2022

Mississippi State Head Coach Ben Howland

Opening Statement

BH: “Obviously, that was a very frustrating second half and loss to be up six [at halftime] and have things going our way at the half. We were up eight with the ball and about eight minutes left. We threw away the ball away, and they made a layup. Then, we gave the ball away again off a bad shot combating their press instead of having composure. We didn’t do a good job in the last eight minutes of this game. We’ve got to do a better job about recognizing the time and score. We shouldn’t have had any worry with an eight-point lead and trying to turn that into 10 [in transition]. We should have just been smart and taken better care of the basketball.”

[We had] 10 turnovers in the second half. They scored 24 points off our 16 total turnovers this game. That’s a huge stat. Another huge stat was [Florida’s Anthony] Duruji having 18 points in the second half. He killed us. He’s a great player who made a couple big three’s and did good things for them. [Tyree] Appleby also played a good game and made some big shots for them. Give those two guys credit.”

“Tolu did a great job for us in the second half, scoring all 17 of his points in the second half, but we had 14 out of the rest of the team. Apart from our 10 second half turnovers, they shot 54 percent from the field and 42 percent from three the whole game. We also fouled too much and gave them way too many free throws. Overall, they took 30, way too many fouls on our end.”

Q: Shakeel Moore mentioned that the ball got stuck on offense down the stretch, what did you see from your vantage point?

BH: “A lot of that was coming against the press. Some of it was not attacking their 1-3-1 correctly. Their goal was to take the ball out of Iverson’s [Molinar] hands. We’ve got to have guys step up and control the ball better when he doesn’t have it.”

Q: How do you think Tolu Smith is playing now?

BH: “I thought he played a much better second half. He had no points and no rebounds at the break. I implored him to do better. He only started practicing on Friday. He has been working hard to get back to himself. Hopefully, that will happen soon over the next few games and days. He also has to do a better job on the defensive end of the floor. [Florida’s Jason] Jitoboh had three baskets against him in the second half. He played big for them down the stretch.”

Q: What’s the best way to address needing to do better with time and score?

BH: “The best way is to gain that experience by watching film. We’ve had two games, tonight and against Colorado State, where we had a lead with less than eight minutes left that we let slip away. They outscored us by 15 with less than eight minutes to go. We can’t let that happen. Turnovers and execution all need to be improved if we want to make those plays.”

Q: Do you think the team has relied too much on trying to get the ball to Iverson Molinar for shots?

BH: “He had five assists. I thought he did a great job and had some great assists in the first half. When you have a point guard, you get the ball to him and try to get him to make plays. We only had 11 assists tonight, and he had five of them. Another thing is that we’ve got to get more balance in our scoring. Garrison only having three shots is crazy. He has got to be more aggressive when he gets the ball. We need to make more opportunities for him to take more shots.”

"Florida only took 45 shots tonight and scored 80 points because they got to the line so much. We've got to play without fouling. We had way too many fouls tonight. When your opponent takes 30 foul shots, it's hard to beat them."

Q: You mentioned they were denying Iverson late in the game. Do you expect Shakeel Moore to step up in those moments?

BH: "He did just that. Shakeel had zero turnovers during the game. When Iverson was out and he was playing the point, he did some really good things for us."

Q: Should your team have taken more three-point shots in your opinion?

BH: "No, because they weren't presented. It's not like we were passing down open shots from three. We took what we were given. I thought Shak [Shakeel Moore] in particular shot it well. Rocket [Watts] had a couple good looks, one was just flat. We need him to be a guy that can make those. I thought [D.J.] Jeffries had one earlier in the game that was a three, but his foot was on the line. I don't think that was a reason we lost tonight. We gave them too many good looks."

Guard Shakeel Moore

Q: What happened down the stretch in the last seven minutes?

SM: "I would just say they wanted it more. They played harder down the stretch. They were hitting shots. I just feel like we have to do a better job with capitalizing when we have the lead and keeping our composure on the road and finishing out the game."

Q: What happened to the offence in the last few minutes?

SM: "I would say we were sticking to one side too long. We weren't moving it. Honestly, they were speeding us up, and we should have just kept composure. Like I said, make plays, move the ball around and get it down low. But the ball stuck, and that's what hurt us."

Q: What was this week like for you with knowing you wanted to work on your shooting?

SM: "Just waking up earlier than normal. Coming in hours before practice. Put in the time on my shot, working on it and staying consistent. It's all about those hours outside of practice. That's really important to work on yourself, and the things you need to improve on."

Q: Do you have the confidence in this team to bounce back after a loss?

SM: "Most definitely, I know we can. We're built for it. I think we work. Work never goes unnoticed. I feel that we'll be able to easily bounce back this week and going into practice tomorrow."

Q: What's the best way for the team to move on from a loss like this?

SM: "Just going into practice with our heads high ready to get to work. Get right back to it. We got a quick turnaround on Saturday, and our main focus is that game. I feel like we just have to have a good and hard practice to prepare for that."

Q: How quick do you have to shift your attention to the game on Saturday against Ole Miss?

SM: "It has to shift quick. Like I said, it's a quick turnaround this Saturday. We have to get in there tomorrow and work on the things we need to work on. We have to learn from [our mistakes], but our attention shifts to them now. Heading into our next practice, we have to really lock in on that game."