

2021-22 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State at Texas A&M – March 5, 2022

Mississippi State Head Coach Ben Howland

Opening Statement

BH: "I'm really disappointed that we couldn't finish the job. When you get down 19, which we've done too often this last half of the year, it's hard to come back especially on the road. I'm really proud of the way our guys fought. I thought Andy [Andersson Garcia] and Cam [Cameron Matthews] gave us great minutes. I thought Shak [Shakeel Moore] did well during that period of time. I thought Tolu [Smith] played well offensively tonight. Ultimately, in the first half, their press and their pressure sped us up. We had way too many turnovers, nine in the first half. They came out and really got it going."

"We fought our way back into the game and had a chance. It was a one possession game with two minutes to go. [Tyrece] Radford went left when we knew that was the way he was going to go. Quenton Jackson drove in on us and dumped it off to the big for the foul that got them to the line. The regular season is now in the books, 8-10 in conference play is not what we expected or wanted. We have a whole new season coming ahead of us in Tampa. That's what I told the team, 17-14, 8-10 is not what we wanted, but we need to believe in ourselves and give it everything we've got Thursday night against South Carolina."

Q: Is there any cause for the rough first half start?

BH: "It seems like it's been consistent, and I'm not sure. If I had the answer, I would've obviously figured it out by now. We've just got to come out well. We've talked about that. In the last game against Auburn, that was a huge point of emphasis. We've got to make some shots. We've made two three's in the last four games. We're going to see some zone coming up on Thursday. We've got to knock down the wide-open shots. That will help loosen things up."

Q: You guys only attempted four three-pointers, your fewest attempted this season. Was that by design, or was it coincidence?

BH: "It just kind of worked out that way. We're passing up some open jump shots once in a while, but not three's. Iverson [Molinar] had a couple of plays tonight where he was wide open. One was in the first half, a three at the top of the key, and the other was in the second half at the foul line. We've got to take the open shots and not try to force the issue. We can't play to contested shots."

Q: Does this game stick out as a what if type of opportunity? Do you think if you pick up these kinds of games, it's a different reality for your team this season?

BH: "I don't think that down 19 was a good of a chance as say the game at Florida. That was a huge missed opportunity, especially early on. The game against Auburn was a great opportunity, having a five-point lead twice with five minutes to go. Even the game at Arkansas with it being a one-point game with two minutes to go. I think there's plenty of them you could pick out."

"I'm really happy to see Tolu [Smith] rounding into form. He played a lot of minutes tonight as well. He played 39 in the last game and played almost 29 minutes tonight. He's really starting to show what he's capable of, but he's got to be a better defender going forward."

Q: What's the practice plan heading into Tampa?

BH: "Because we play Thursday, we're going to take tomorrow [Sunday] off for a day of rest. Monday, we'll have a hard practice preparing for South Carolina's defense with how they're going to zone and press us. Then, we'll come back Tuesday. That'll be a light day. We'll shoot individually in the morning and have a team lift in the afternoon. That'll be it. Wednesday, we'll have another short practice preparing for South Carolina. Then, Thursday we'll show up and play our game."

Guard/Forward Cameron Matthews

Q: What contributed to the slow first half start for you guys? Was it something Texas A&M was doing, or did you guys shoot yourself in the foot?

CM: "I think it was both. We shot ourselves in the foot with some silly turnovers, but I also think that pressure bothered us. It slowed our offense down."

Q: What worked to allow you guys to go on a second half run?

CM: "Our defense intensity picked up. Our energy picked up. Offensively, we didn't let the pressure bother us. We flowed into the offense a little better than we did in the first half."

Q: Does this loss feel similar to others that you guys have taken this year in that it's another missed opportunity?

CM: "That's kind of been the story for us this season. We're always really close towards the end of the game and just can't pull it off. We've got to hit the film, continue to learn from our mistakes and just win in Tampa."

Q: What's the feel for the conference tournament, and what do you guys have to do to make a run in Tampa?

CM: "I feel good because the last time Mississippi State won the SEC Tournament it was in Tampa. That's just everything lining up right there. I have a good feeling we'll make some noise in the tournament."