

2021-22 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State at Ole Miss – January 8, 2022

Mississippi State Head Coach Ben Howland

Q: Opening Statement

BH: “Obviously, the first half was really disappointing with the way they came out and jumped on us. I thought they were just tougher than we were in the first half, especially on the glass. Nysier Brooks had eight offensive rebounds for the game and five in the first half. Matthew Murrell really got it going on early, and we did not respond because he had 23 points at halftime. We did a better job in the second half because we played better defensively and cut the lead down to seven with four minutes to go. Spotting a good team on their home floor a 14-point lead is a really hard obstacle to overcome.”

“Give them credit, I thought Murrell was fantastic, only missing one shot and playing phenomenal from the three-point line. Brooks was dominant on the glass with 16 rebounds to go with his 15 points. [Daeshun] Ruffin was good tonight as well as [Jaemyn] Brakefield. They all played well tonight and took it to us. We’ve got to regroup, learn from this as a team, watch the film on Monday and rebound as a team Wednesday against Georgia.”

Q: Tolu Smith was out again today. Do you have a reason as to why he was out, and when can you expect him back?

BH: “We’re hoping he will be allowed to be back at practice on Monday.”

Q: You put DJ Jeffries on Murrell in the second half. Where there any thoughts about doing that in the first frame?

BH: “We should have. That’s poor coaching, and we should have had him guarding [Matthew] Murrell to start the game in retrospect. [Tye] Fagan was coming off of a career high at Tennessee where Murrell played good as well. The size was a better matchup when he was guarded by Iverson Molinar and Shakeel Moore.”

Q: Ole Miss out-toughed you guys tonight. Is that surprising during an in-state rivalry game like this?

BH: “I don’t think they out-toughed us the entire game, just in the first half. They punched us right in the mouth to start the game, but I thought we did a good job of fighting back. We brought it back to 19-17 in the first half. Then, they did it again. We didn’t execute well offensively in the first half.”

“When you look at the difference in the game, we shot 46 percent from the field, but 3-of-16 from three-point range is a killer when they go 11-of-23. They had eight more three’s and shot such a high percentage from three.”

Q: Do you try to stretch it out more in transition, and was that a focus tonight without Tolu Smith?

BH: “The only way you can get out in transition is to not be taking the ball out of the net. That was the problem in the first half. We weren’t getting enough stops and couldn’t run out on made shots instead of missed shots. The second half, we did a much better job in that respect. In the second half, they were only 2-for-9 from three and 44 percent from the field. That’s why we were able to get out and get some runs in the late part of the game.”

Q: Matthew Murrell had only gone for 15 points once prior to this game. Did you evaluate him as a player who could get as hot as he did?

BH: "Two of our assistants noticed he didn't miss a shot tonight in warmups. You can see he gained a lot of confidence from that last game. He's also had a lot of good games at home. He played phenomenally in a game against Memphis at home earlier this season. Give the kid credit, he really played well tonight. He's a kid we knew was a really good player."

Guard Iverson Molinar

Q: What did you see in the first half from Ole Miss?

IM: "I feel like we just had to be a little tougher in the first half with having that sense of urgency on defense. We've just got to make adjustments. When he [Matthew Murrell] made two shots, we've got to make adjustments on him. We've got to have a little more sense of urgency coming out after the timeouts since he already had two three's."

Q: Why wasn't there that urgency in the first half? What was lacking?

IM: "We've got to be more focused. We have got to make adjustments. They were making adjustments, as a matter of fact, during the game. That's what we need to do. We need to learn how to make adjustments while the game is going on – not before or after."

Q: Did the 10-day gap play a factor in this game at all?

IM: "Not at all, we felt like we were well prepared for this team. We had an advantage because we didn't have a game. We were preparing for Ole Miss the whole time. Like I told you, we've just got to learn from this and learn to make adjustments during the game. Now, like some of the coaches said, this should be a wakeup call for us because we've got to have that sense of urgency."

Q: Without Tolu Smith in the lineup, what kind of challenges does that pose?

IM: "We missed Tolu for sure. Tolu is a threat down there. He's one of the best passers off the post and one of the best post players that can pass the ball. We actually needed that a little bit today."

Q: It felt like Matthew Murrell couldn't miss tonight. Is it just one of those nights where you have to shake it off?

IM: "It's a hot hand, and it happens in basketball. All we've got to do is just keep playing. I'm not going to blame whoever is guarding him. It's the whole team's fault. The whole team has got to make that adjustment. We've just got to keep playing."

Q: Did you feel like pushing the pace of play in transition was a good strategy? It seemed like it worked in you guys' benefit.

IM: "It did. Picking up the pace a little bit, it did help in the second half. Some players kept hitting shots. It's going to happen."