

**2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**  
**No. 23 Mississippi State at Minnesota – December 11, 2022**

**Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans**

***Q: What are your thoughts about your team's first road win?***

**CJ:** "Basketball is a game of runs, and it's going to happen in most games you play in, especially on the road. We stretched out our lead right before halftime, and that felt good for everybody walking into the locker room. We came out and had a couple different stretches there where we got it to 16. Unfortunately, they cut it to 10. We got it to 18. Then, they cut it to 11 pretty quickly. So, we had some adversity that way. The guys are really good in the huddle. They stuck together, and they responded to the runs by the home team. We didn't have a lot of stress going down the stretch."

***Q: How good was it to Shakeel Moore to come out, score, and see his hard work paying off?***

**CJ:** "[I'm] Really happy for Shak. I have staff members telling me all the time how much work he's been putting in on his own. Everybody sees him in the gym putting up extra shots even when he wasn't shooting very well. It's very easy to have an attitude of 'That's not helping, so why should I continue to work.' From the sounds of it, that has not been his approach, which has been great to see."

"I'm happy for our team. For him [Moore] to be rewarded with that, it should encourage his confidence going forward. Certainly, we need some outside shooting. It wasn't just that. He had a couple of silly turnovers, but he was pretty active. He had a couple of Shak type steals and showed his athleticism turning the defense into offense. Those are game changers. They change the mood, and he's really good at that."

***Q: How did you feel that your team handled this environment in Minnesota?***

**CJ:** "I thought they handled it great. From when we arrived, to the meetings, huddles and locker rooms, we just kept talking about sticking together. That we had to get this done on our own. There aren't very many people in this building that are on our side, and that's just the way it's going to be when you go on the road."

"I liked it from start-to-finish for the most part, even how we traveled with meetings and shootarounds. Our focus was really good, and they were ready to play. With one game in 13 days being through with finals and eight days between games, coaches love that time. I don't think the players particularly do. They handled it well. I thought we got better, and we were able to get our first true road win of the season."

***Q: How big was 10-0 run to close the first half?***

**CJ:** "I thought it was huge. I think we were up early. Then, they closed it. It was back-and-forth, and then we had that run to end the half. I think that helped or confidence and the vibe in our locker room. Tolu [Smith] was great from the free throw line, and that's another young man that spends countless hours in the gym working on his craft, specifically free throws. He's been struggling, but we felt like he would get back to form. Historically, he's not that bad of a free throw shooter. He takes so many of them that our team percentage is low because of it. The game's a lot easier when guys are getting fouled. They can step up and make free throws. He should have a lot of confidence going forward."

***Q: Tolu gave credit to Coach Miller on his free throw shooting. Did you remove yourself as his free throw coach?***

**CJ:** "I fired myself. I tried to go inward and remember when I was a free throw shooter, but I wasn't that good of a free throw shooter. I fashion myself as a good free throw shooting coach. I've helped many a young man with their trials and tribulations from the line. Obviously, it didn't work with Tolu. Fortunately, Coach Miller came to my rescue, and I'm glad Tolu recognized that."

***Q: How did Dashawn Davis feel getting back to playing today?***

**CJ:** "I haven't talked to him, but he still wasn't 100 percent. He was hobbling around a little bit, but the [gametime] adrenaline certainly helped. He was rusty. He showed me his strength, his toughness and his athleticism, but he couldn't finish it around the basket. It was nice to see him make those moves and get into the heart of the defense. He had that nice three later that should help him. It was great to have him back. He's a big part of who we are, and hopefully who we become. His toughness, his competitive instincts and his desire to do well and win – we see every day. He had six rebounds, three assists and one turnover. He really defended well. So, it's a big shot in the arm for us going forward."

**Forward Tolu Smith and Guard Shakeel Moore**

***Q: Shak, how did it feel to see that three-point shot fall?***

**SM:** "It felt amazing. I put so much time, effort, and work into building that confidence. For it to come out tonight and play apart in tonight's game, it felt really good."

***Q: How did it feel to come out and get the win tonight in your first true road game?***

**SM:** "[It felt] Great, we've been working towards it all week. Coach [Jans] said this was a true test coming into somebody else's barn, and we executed. It felt good to get that first true road win."

***Q: "Tolu, what is different about the group this year compared to others that you have been with."***

**TS:** "I would say the intensity. On both ends of the ball, we're just picking it up and not giving up on any possession. We have that grit and that desire to win every game. I just want to add too, Shak's been putting in that work on his jumper, and I'm happy for him. He's been in the gym day in and day out. So, I'm excited for him."

***Q: Tolu, your free throws improved tonight. What have you been doing differently?***

**TS:** "I've just been taking time, lining the ball up and then knocking down the shot. I feel like I was overthinking most of my free throws in the beginning. I've just got to keep practicing the shot. I give a lot of credit to Coach Miller. I have been shooting a lot of free throws in that time after practice."

***Q: Shak, what have these last few weeks been like? What work have you been doing to get your shot right.***

**SM:** "A lot of time before and after practice on off days. I put in the time to get those reps and see the ball go through to build that confidence. It feels amazing to come out and play with that confidence shooting the ball."

***Q: Tolu, what have you guys seen from Shak and his work ethic?***

**TS:** "It's great to see. Usually, when guys get in a slump, they tend to not be level-headed, but Shak brings the energy every day. He gets the reps in before and after practice just being a friend and seeing him succeed is a great feeling for myself. I've seen him put the reps in, and I knew it was going to come. I told him every day that he was going to make shots, and that it's just going to come."

***Q: What did you think of D.J. Jeffries' performance tonight?***

**TS:** "D.J. was hooping. He almost had a triple-double. We need him every night. He does a lot for us from scoring, rebounding and moving the ball. There's a lot of positions he can play. I'm just glad to have him on the team."

***Q: How do road games like this help you down the stretch?***

**TS:** "It helps us immensely. We come in here, and it's only us. There's nobody else with us. We have a little bit of crowd, but it's just us in that locker room. When they go on runs, it makes us get into huddles, get closer and come together. When they make those runs, seeing us be able to essentially cut off the water, and we make sure they can't keep going on runs. It's a great feeling to show that we can stay together."

***Q: What is this team's ceiling?***

**SM:** "That's a tough one. To be honest, we aren't playing our best basketball offensively. We have still got guys that are still working towards their game. Defensively, we have still got a long way to go. We've got more to give but it's really high."