

2022-23 Mississippi State Postgame Quotes

No. 17 Mississippi State vs. Nicholls – December 17, 2022

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: What are your overall thoughts on the game?

CJ: “They [Nicholls] had our full attention. If you watched the game when they played at Texas Tech, they should have won the game. They were the better overall team over the 40 minutes. We talked to our guys until they were blue in the face. We knew four out of their five guys were fifth-year seniors if I wasn’t mistaken. So, they’ve been around the block a couple of times in the terms of basketball. They’ve been in some great venues against some great programs. They weren’t going to be afraid or intimidated to go toe-toe against us. We knew that, and we told our guys over and over and over.

“They got off to a way better start than we did. They established themselves, and we got into some foul issues which we haven’t had to deal with to be honest with you thus far this season. Obviously, our second half coming out of the gate, was great. We got our starters out there and survived with two fouls. We regained the lead and just let our foot off the gas. We got it up 10 or 12 if I’m not mistaken. Obviously at the end, it got a little wild.”

Q: Two close games this week against two mid-major teams. What did you learn about your team this week?

CJ: “That we’ve got to get better. I’m not with them 24/7. I don’t know if they are reading the headlines. We talk about it, and we address it. I think it’s obvious to teams that have to play us that we have to play like we have to play to be really good. If we don’t play that style, if we don’t rely on our defense, if we don’t turn the ball over and if don’t lock in every single time, we’re not going to be very good. We struggle on offense sometimes. We were 2-for-14 tonight [on three-pointers]. If we don’t make free throws, the narrative and the mood is a different story. What I’ve learned is that we got to do what we do and not experiment late in the game.”

“I love Tolu Smith. We run an out-of-bounds play, and he breaks it off not because he’s selfish it’s because he wants to win ... We just made a lot of mistakes in the last five minutes of the game. We made mistakes early, but there’s not time to make up for it. When you’re coming down the stretch, they’re magnified because of the obvious there only so many possessions left in the game. We made some poor decisions down the stretch that almost cost us the game.”

Q: What’s the message to the team this week against Drake?

CJ: In my opinion, and I haven’t watched a lot of them to be honest. I think, arguably, they’re the second-best team we play this fall. Marquette is the best in my opinion. I may feel different about them tonight when I dived into them a little bit deeper. I know their players, I know their program, and their coaching staff.”

“They’re going to be super excited to play us. I talked to them this summer how silly of a game it was for us to play them. We’re playing them two hours from home. They’re picked to win The [Missouri] Valley. They’ve got returners left and right. They’ve got older guys that were on a NCAA qualifying team.”

“We’re obviously not playing our best. By Tuesday, our guys will fully understand who we’re playing. It’s a huge game. We’ve got to end this thing right and have a good taste in our mouths before Christmas. Having a little break and getting our legs back underneath us – we all need it. Some guy’s legs are getting a little weary.”

"We're in the middle of four games in nine days. We practiced really hard before the Minnesota game because we had all that time ... In 10 days, you're going to hear me talking about this game being such a big game. The next game on your schedule is a big game. We've got to regain our momentum and feel good heading into Christmas break and SEC play."

Q: Your team has had close wins, come from behind wins. How happy is it to be 11-0 despite all of that? What kind of lessons do you feel you could learn in all these different situations?

CJ: "We'll all find out how many lessons we've learned in SEC play. We're going to, hopefully, be in a lot of close games. If we learn from those lessons, we will know when we're in these situations again and the decisions that we make. Just because you make silly plays doesn't mean you're going to learn from it. You could do it again, and that's my job to get them to remember that."

"I will talk about that in huddles like "Hey, remember when we played Nicholls. We were up three shooting a free throw, and I said if he misses it, we are going to foul.' ... We will draw upon those experiences to the best of my memory to try and help us remedy those situations in the future. But like I always say, I much rather learn and grow while you win then have to learn tough lessons while you lose. Yeah, we're happy that we're 11-0. Heck yeah, but we aren't playing as well as we were a week or two ago. But over the course of the season, you will have that sometimes."

Guard Dashawn Davis and Forward Tyler Stevenson

Q: For a team you guys couldn't put away, what was Nicholls doing that made them so effective today?

DD: "They were just playing hard, playing tough and playing fearless. That's hard to compete with on any day."

TS: "I'll have to agree with that too. There was some stuff that we could have done better. I'm just glad we got the win. We're moving on to the next one and getting ready for Drake."

Q: Tyler, you got off to a hot start. How important is that for you when you see the offense struggling early and you provide a spark off the bench?

TS: "I just try to keep my confidence up. I never get too low on my lows, and I never get too high on my highs. My teammates believe in me, the coaches believe in me and I have to give credit to them for believing in me. That puts confidence in me for me to go out and do it."

Q: Dashawn, what's it like for you have a guy come off the bench and give a contribution like that right away when the team needed it?

DD: "It's great. I know every time he's going to play hard, share the ball and just do what he does. I'm never worried."

Q: For both of you, what was the team's confidence like back in October? What do you feel the confidence level like now?

TS: "I think our confidence level was pretty good back in October during the Fall when it [practice] first started. To me, we all gelled pretty good together. We all hang out outside of basketball together. So, that helps too in my opinion with the confidence level for all of us."

DD: "I agree with what he [Stevenson] said. We're always together. We do everything together. So, it was kind of easy to bond and to gel on the court for the most part."

Q: What has been the key for the last two games to come back like you did?"

DD: "Just playing the way that we play, playing the way Coach [Jans] talks about. If we do that, we're going to prevail every time we do that."

Q: What was Coach Jans' message at halftime?

DD: "He was just telling us to play how we play, play our game and play tough."

Q: When those outside shots aren't falling, how do you keep the confidence to keep taking them and get those eventually to fall?

DD: "My teammates really give me that confidence and give us that confidence to keep shooting. So, that's always a good thing."

TS: "We believe in one another. We trust each other. If somebody gets a shot, we just believe that they're going to make it because we have that belief and that confidence in them."

Nicholls Head Coach Austin Claunch

On today's game ...

AC: "It was a hell of a fight for our guys. It sucks. They did a great job, gave ourselves a chance."

On his team not giving up after being down by 12 during second half ...

AC: "Well, we've been there before. We've played some really good teams. They went on a huge run the start of the second half. Then, we were able to settle back down and start guarding again. We started making shots. We got some good looks. They're a hell of a defensive team. You have to give them a lot of credit. Overall, just proud of the fight of our team to overcome adversity."

On his team's defensive effort ...

AC: "We were able to force over 18 turnovers which is a good way to fight their size down low. I'm proud of our fight, just not enough. We've got to make more plays to be able to win again. We're playing some good basketball, and we've got to keep building."