

## **2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**

### **No. 15 Mississippi State vs. Drake – December 20, 2022**

#### **Head Coach Chris Jans**

##### ***Q: What did you see in the last two or three minutes of the game from your team?***

**CJ:** “Drake had us right where they wanted us. They were playing a team that was undefeated and had a ranking by their name. They were down 10 (35-25) in the second half, and they chipped away at it. They found a way to make it a one possession game with three or four minutes left in the game, and that’s all you can ask for. That’s what happened. They made the plays down the stretch, and we didn’t.”

“We had a huge defensive rebound that we didn’t come up with that I thought was a game changer when they scored. We didn’t execute on offense when we had a chance to tie the game, and we didn’t get a shot off.”

“[Roman] Penn made some free throws, and he played very well. He controlled their offense. He had 19 points on 12 shots, three assists and took care of the basketball. He did a really good job of quarterbacking their team. Their three perimeter guys: [Sardar] Calhoun, [Tucker] DeVries and Penn gave us fits. I thought Calhoun made some key shots that really helped their team.”

##### ***Q: What was Drake doing to limit Tolu Smith’s production?***

**CJ:** “They were heavy on him. They also weren’t guarding some of our guys on the perimeter. They just take that guy and stick him in the paint and plug it up rather than just having a guy in help. They have more than one guy in help, and our passers had a hard time deciding if they could throw it in there or not.”

“From where I sit, I thought we had opportunities to throw it in there, but they don’t want to turn it over I understand that too. It’s easy for me to say when I’m sitting on the sideline. I have got to do a better job of figuring out different ways and get a little more creative with how we can get that ball inside to him [Tolu Smith] so he can do what he does for us. Hats off to Drake. They stuck with their gameplan and found a way to win.”

##### ***Q: How frustrating were the turnovers during this game for you?***

**CJ:** “It’s very frustrating, especially [against] a team in Drake that doesn’t press. They trapped Tolu [Smith] some in the post, but they weren’t trapping us in the half court or full court. I felt they weren’t putting us under a whole lot of duress.”

“It always boils down to a pass-and-catch game. It’s all about passing and catching the ball. You’ve got to score baskets. When you play a team sport with one ball, you’ve got to be able to take care of it. You have got to be able to pass-and-catch it. It’s a lot more to it than people would probably think. Unfortunately for us, it has been a sore spot recently. It’s something that we emphasize each and every day in our practices and in our game planning. We’re trying to work on their fundamentals and be fundamentally sound as individual basketball players and certainly as a team. How they were guarding us, how they were forcing some of them by the extra defenders being in paint and making the passing lanes into the paint a little more difficult than we would like.”

***Q: How important is it to get a guy like Eric Reed Jr. going to open it up for someone like Tolu Smith in the post?***

**CJ:** “Yeah, the last 10 minutes of the first half, I thought ‘there we go’ because we were a bit smoother and really sharing the ball. When the ball goes in the basket, it obviously solves a lot of problems. We struggled early again. Then, we kind of got it going. We had that putback at the buzzer that would’ve given us even more momentum if we had got it to go in, but it didn’t stick in the goal.”

“We had some struggles finishing around the basket early in the game. We’ve got to be more consistent with all of our guys. [Going] 7-of-19 from three, I’d probably take that every game to be honest. It wasn’t like we didn’t make three’s because we did. We didn’t shoot it as well around the basket and the painted area. We had some chances to get some baskets in the closing minutes, but we couldn’t get it in the goal.”

***Q: What do you feel like you have learned about your team this far, and what are some things that you have to focus on heading into SEC play?***

**CJ:** “Guys that follow us know that we haven’t been playing our best recently. I do know that when the ball was tipped this afternoon, our guys were ready. They were locked into the scout, and they were energized. We struggled on offense, but our defense was on-point, especially early.”

“It unfolded as the game went on and a lot of that is on me. It’s a combination of me and some of the players we have. I told my staff, and the entire team this that we’ve got to figure out a way to play more guys. It’s what I’m used to, and it’s required to play with the kind of effort we want to play with. For whatever reason, I haven’t been able to pull the trigger as much as I would like. We’ve got to be able to do that.”

“It’s disappointing, we were 11-0 and had a chance to go through the first couple of months unscathed and have a ranking next to our name which is great for the fans. It doesn’t move the needle that much in terms of end of the year type stuff, but that will all go away. We’ll have to reset, we’ll have to regroup and go into the gauntlet of the SEC. Each and every night will be some challenging games but also some great opportunities for our team as we go forward.”