

2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State at Arkansas – February 11, 2023

Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: Someone asked you about your last game against Arkansas before the game, that's all history now, right?

CJ: "Yeah, I didn't spend a lot of time thinking about that. Will McNair [Jr.] wanted to talk a lot about it in the postgame. That wasn't on the forefront of my mind, [I'm] just proud of my kids. I've heard all kinds of things about this place [Bud Walton Arena]. I've never been to a game here. It's a great venue to compete in. It felt really good. I felt really good about where we were coming into this game. We talked about getting the road win at South Carolina. We talked about the game at Alabama, not that we were happy about it, but how we handled the atmosphere because we felt the crowd didn't affect our play or the outcome. We wanted to lean into that tonight, and we did."

Q: What was your plan going into this game?

CJ: "We wanted to protect the paint at all costs. They haven't been shooting it great from three. They were 4-for-18 tonight. We wanted to keep the ball out of the paint as much as possible. We guarded our own men. We didn't switch for the first 35 minutes of the game. The last five, we went to switching all the ball screens. That really helped us because they would get in a rhythm and 0 [Anthony Black] would drive in the ball against us. We were struggling in our coverage. So, we went to the switch because I thought it would help us."

"In the post, we trapped like we normally do, even though they aren't great scorers down there. We thought it was an opportunity to get our defense revved and turn them over. We planned to play more zone, but we felt like our defense settled in. So, we didn't do that. I called it on the fly once and made my staff mad at me because they banged a three, but that happens sometimes. What I showed them on the clips in practice is that we're in man, but I want them to feel like it's zone."

"I wanted there to be strong gaps. Normally, we do not come off of guys in the deep corners when they drive, but we did more tonight than usual. We just wanted to protect the paint at all costs. We felt like it was going to be a man's game around the basket. They were better at finishing than we were. We struggled all night long at the rim. We were worried about that as the game unfolded. The last thing we talked about was you have to win the rebound battle to have a better chance to win. We were really good at halftime, but only ended up winning by a couple. I thought that was the key to the game."

Q: The offensive gameplan seemed to be to attack the paint, do you talk about that before the game or is that the flow in the offense?

CJ: "We talk a lot about inside-out offense, whether it be via the pass from Will [McNair Jr.], Tolu [Smith] or any guard getting in there. It doesn't mean the ball has to be shot, but it breaks the defense down and multiple opportunities present themselves if you get the ball in the paint. The first 10-to-15 minutes, we were running good offense. I really liked where we were at."

"In the second half, it was a little bit of stop and start. We were just trying to survive. It felt like at the end. You got to give credit to them. They're big. The guards are big, and the forwards are big. I think we talked about it pregame: that's normal with the bigs around the league, but their guards are big. The court felt smaller, but we were trying to spread them out in the second half especially and get as many ball screens as we could."

Q: Can you talk about Cameron Matthews down the stretch?

CJ: “When he made the first one [free throw], I felt really good after that. It’s about confidence and rhythm. I was pretty upset with him when he got the foul on the baseline out of bounds. Of course, I love Cam. He’s our emotional leader. Of course, he said I didn’t foul him, and I said ‘I watched you foul him. Yes, you did.’ That coming from the guy who never fouls. We had an exchange, but I know him. I know these guys well enough individually and where we’re at. He responded, he played with four fouls down the whole stretch.”

“Some of the guys were like ‘not yet’, but you must play your best players on the road like this. We have to get him in the game and try to figure out a way to win it. He made some big drives and big free throws.”

Q: What about the play where he [Matthews] met Mitchell met at the rim?

CJ: “Cam is so explosive. They’re excellent at shielding the rim. They’re well taught and well-schooled, even better than we are. That’s one of the reasons why we were struggling at the rim. That play unfolded before me. He didn’t make it, he got the putback. That was athletic of both of them.”

Q: How big was it for Eric Reed Jr. to step in and hit that three?

CJ: “The best part is that our bench went crazy. They were so ecstatic for him. Hopefully, that will take the lid off for him. He got a big offensive rebound as well. One thing that not enough people talk about is that he doesn’t turn the ball over. To put someone out there who can defend, rebound, and not turn the ball over is a luxury. He just doesn’t turn the ball over. He’s had six all year long, and that’s remarkable for the amount of minutes he plays. That tells you he knows who he is, and he can shoot the ball. He’s certainly in a tough slump but has had some good games. We kept throwing him out there. I believe in him, and our team believes in him. So, that was certainly a nice moment.”

Q: How fun has the locker-room been the last few games?

CJ: “Tonight was fun. They had to wait a bit because I had to do an interview with TV. That means we won. So, it’s a good thing. They were rocking and rolling. We’re going to enjoy this, and it’s going to be a fun plane ride home. I know what’s looming on Wednesday [against Kentucky]. We’ll get right to it as a staff. But for the players, we’ll let them enjoy this for 24 hours. Then, we’ll regroup and try to put a plan together.”

Q: We need everyone that can be there to get to the Hump on Wednesday, what would it mean to have another big crowd?

CJ: “Do we ever, every game is big. That’s just the reality of the situation, but it’s Kentucky and they got beat today. We’re going to take everything they’ve got and then some. I wasn’t happy about it [their loss] today, but I can’t have any control over it. We need the Hump to rock. If you can’t make it and you’re a season ticket holder, please try to find a way to get people in your seats. If you need help, please email us or call us. We’ll do our darndest to create an environment because it’s a heck of an opportunity for us.”

Forward Cameron Matthews

Q: What was going through your mind at the free throw line late in the game?

CM: “I had to be a leader for my team. I just had to step up there and knock those free throws down.”

Q: "What's it like playing in a hostile environment with 20,000 people against you and getting it done?"

CM: "Give credit to Arkansas, they're a really good team. We had a game plan and executed it. Shout-out to Coach Anwar [on the scouting report]."

Q: "How does your experience help you in those late-game situations?"

CM: "I think it helps me a lot. I think my job is to rally the guys and get everyone on the same page."