

2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State vs. Kentucky – February 15, 2023

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: Can you talk about the rebounding in tonight's game?

CJ: "Listen, it's real easy for me or any other coach to talk about rebounding and trying to get it on the floor. They're [Kentucky] really good at it. It's one of those things, I'm not sure if we weren't checking at the level we needed to. Obviously, they were committed to the glass tonight. It starts with [Oscar] Tshiebwe, he got it on the floor tonight. We can dissect the stat sheet. If you take off the rebound numbers and look at everything else, I would feel better good about our chances to play like a blind stat sheet and resume. You would be like 'Oh, I think we won,' but obviously that was too much to overcome."

Q: What made Oscar Tshiebwe so hard to defend tonight?

CJ: "I think him making those [jump] shots early made him feel really good. That's probably on me more than anyone else. I think he shot 36 or 37 percent from the mid-range, and we weren't really trying to stop it. We were more worried about shot faking and driving, and everything else that he does. That's not on our guys, that's on me. But when you see that ball go through the net, it makes you feel good. I'm sure that helped him attack the ball a little more."

Q: What happened during that stretch when they were on that 18-2 run?

CJ: "They played really good, and we didn't. We struggled on both ends. I thought as the game unfolded in the early timeouts, my comments in the huddle were 'I love how we're playing offense.' It was as good as offense as we've been playing all year against an athletic, well-coached team and a team that we knew is going to have a mindset of must win. I talked about it all week in preparation, we talked about it today. We wanted to try to get our guys to exceed that mindset but we certainly had a bad stretch. I know that they played really well, and we didn't. I'll have to watch the film to break it down."

Q: What is the message to your team to avoid this snowballing and to get a win Saturday in Oxford?

CJ: "We'll talk more about that tomorrow. You don't have a choice. If we're trying to get to where we're trying to get, we don't have a choice. I know what my mindset is going to be, and what my staff's mindset is going to be. I would imagine our kids' mindset will match our approach tomorrow. I think we will get off the mat, get after it again, put a game plan together and get ready to play on our rival's home court. We won't have a lot of time to sit in it. We're going to have to regroup and get ready to play another one."

Q: Can you speak to the atmosphere that your team had in the Hump tonight?

CJ: "It was awesome. Unfortunately, they [Kentucky] led for 35 minutes of the game. It kind of felt like us at Arkansas. They kept the crowd out of the game because of how well they played. They were in the lead, and that's just human nature more often than not. Sometimes, when it's close and you're about to take the lead, the crowd will really get into it. That's just what it is all over the country. We just didn't get to take advantage of it as much as we would like because of them being in control the majority of the game. It would've helped us tremendously if we would've had some more runs and been in the lead a little bit longer."

Q: How much confidence to you have in your team to go into Oxford Saturday and carry the momentum from these recent road games?

CJ: "I'm confident in this group. I love coaching this group. They've proven to me what they're made of. We didn't play our best tonight. I've got to give Kentucky a lot of credit. I thought they played really well. From watching them on tape, I thought they played really well. I have no idea what their coaching staff feels about their performance. I thought they played well and deserved to win."

"I'm confident in our group. I really believe that come Saturday at 2:30 that we will come out of the gates fighting, scratching, clawing, putting our best foot forward and giving ourselves the best chance to win. Who knows what the outcome will be? I don't think it's going to be a lack of effort or a lack of focus in preparation heading into Oxford."

Forward Cameron Matthews

Q: What was it that they were doing especially on the offensive glass? Was it a matter of positioning or what did you see there?

CM: "I give credit to Coach Cal and especially [Oscar] Tshiebwe. He's got magnets in his hands, and I don't know how he does it. I guess it was just the physicality, but I don't really know. They were just working hard on the glass."

Q: This is a team you could realistically see again very soon, what is the mindset going into the next one?

CM: "I feel like if we play them again in the near future, I feel like we pretty much will have the same game plan. We emphasized rebounds a lot, but I guess we just have to do it a little bit more."

Forward Tolu Smith

Q: Oscar Tshiebwe was getting some mid-range shots to fall in the game, how tough is he to defend when he stretched the floor like that?

TS: "We know he can shoot it. He's capable, but we were living with the results of those shots. If you shot five or six of those, that's a good position for us. Like you said though, give credit to Kentucky. He made them, and they did a great job."

Q: It's been a long time since the atmosphere has been like that tonight, what's your thoughts just seeing this crowd continue to grow for your guys and where it is right now fan base?"

TS: "It's great. I walked out, and it was a whole bunch of white. I was amazed and thrilled. I appreciate the fan base, and how they continue to support us. I ask that they keep supporting us. We didn't give them what they wanted, but we're going to keep pushing."

Q: You had that winning streak early in the season and obviously had the rough stretch, what's the message or mentality coming off a loss?

PN: "We can't hang our heads, we're onto the next one. We have to get back to the drawing board, do our best and work hard."

Kentucky Head Coach John Calipari

Q: Is the rebounding in this game the grit you've been talking about?

JC: "Yeah, we talked about it. Mississippi State, what they've done in this winning streak and what they've done to good teams, they've dominated offensive rebounds. They've outhustled, been tougher and turned people over. We had one guy [Cason Wallace] go 1-for-13, and we won the game ... He had 11 assists though. He defended and the biggest rebounds, Cason [Wallace] came up with."

"Oscar [Tshiebwe] is beginning to be himself, not quite there yet. They had a small man on Chris [Livingston]. So, we posted him up four or five straight times. It's stuff that we have. So, we didn't have to do something new. We just wanted to get him the ball on the cuts."

Q: How did the nothing to lose mentality help your team?

JC: "The biggest thing I've been talking about to them is 'Refuse to Lose.' You may run out of time, but refuse to lose. Just keep fighting. Today, we missed that one free throw. Then, we miss a couple of three's. Whatever we do to teams, it feels like they shoot 90 percent from the free throw line. It doesn't matter if you usually shoot 50 percent. If you go against us, you shoot 90 percent. We made the plays at the end. The play at halftime made me mad because we were going to let them catch it. Adou [Thiero] tried to go get it, and that kid [Cameron Matthews] makes the three. I thought it was a hard-fought game for both teams."

Q: How does the good free throw shooting at the end effect your team?

JC: "It's how you win games. I've had some of the worst free throw shooting teams ever, but they made shots in the last four or five minutes. Hopefully that's what this team is. Cason [Wallace] knocked his down, Oscar [Tshiebwe] went 3-for-4 and Chris [Livingston] made his."

Q: What did you think of the environment at Humphrey Coliseum?

JC: "It's always crazy here. It's been nuts every time we've played here. To get out of here against a team who is on fire right now was a big deal for us."

Forward Chris Livingston

Q: What changed at halftime for you?

CL: "[Coach] Cal was holding me to a high standard. He was being hard on me because he expects much more out of myself during the game. That's his job. In the second half, I knew I had to play harder and make some plays to make up for how I played in the first half."

Q: How much did the refuse to lose mentality effect you in the second half?

CL: "Down the second half stretch with about seven minutes left, that was all we were saying. Refusing to lose. When it hit four minutes, we said it's winning time. It's that time of the season."

Q: Was there anything that clicked for you in the second half?

CL: "It was more of a mindset. It was a mindset thing. Coach [Calipari] was on me, and I also didn't want to lose. I was playing as hard as I could trying to make winning plays, whether that's getting deflections or rebounds. I was trying to win."

Q: Would you call this a breakout game for you?

CL: "Yeah, I guess you could say that. It was just the mindset of not wanting to lose. So, I was just making winning plays, whether that was scoring or rebounding. That was the mindset that I had, and I had to play with that energy."

Forward Jacob Toppin

Q: What was your takeaway of the overall effort everyone had?

JT: "We knew coming into this game it wasn't going to be anything but a fight. We refused to lose today. We fought and made our runs late. They made their runs late. We stuck it through, dug deep and got the win."

Q: How big was the 18-2 run?

JT: "Obviously, we went on a run. We understood that basketball is a game of runs. We knew they were going to go on their run. We could've backed down and let them win the game, but we didn't. We kept fighting, stayed together and dug deep to get the win."

Q: What is it about this team when your backs are against the wall?

JT: "That's one thing about us, we're never going to back down. We're in a hole right now, but we're going to dig out of it. We believe we're going to dig out of it. We're a great group of guys who are going to stay together, and we're going to continue to fight to the end. We're going to figure this out and turn it around. It started today, we got a good W."