

2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State at No. 21 Auburn – January 14, 2023

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: What were your thoughts on tonight's game?

CJ: “[Committing] 16 turnovers isn’t a good recipe to win on the road. We knew they were going to get after us and be really aggressive on defense. [A] Tip of the cap to Auburn on getting a bunch of deflections and turning us over. We just didn’t get enough shots on goal. We didn’t get to the free throw line at all in the first half. Obviously, we flipped the script a little bit in the second half. I was proud of our fight. I thought they fought and stuck together. It’s a really hard place to play. We just dug ourselves a hole. In the end, it was really too much to overcome.”

Q: Even in a loss, how big was it to get back on track with free throw shooting?

CJ: “We will see. It was a one-game thing. Certainly, it was a hot topic in our program and understandably so. I was glad in the second half that we got there a bunch and got rewarded for being aggressive in the paint and getting downhill. We made the majority of them, 75 percent is a number that we would take with a smile right now.”

Q: Is it frustrating to fix the free throw shooting for this game and then struggle so much from three-point range?

CJ: “Sure, I’m not sure how many college basketball games have been won when you are 0-for-18 from the three-point line especially on the road. I thought we took really good shots. I remember one shot that wasn’t a rhythm shot, and he was open. Shakeel Moore took a three there on the left side kind of late. He was almost surprised he was so open. He shot it because he was open, and that’s what guys do. I get that, but it just wasn’t a rhythm shot. We were trying to run a set, and it wasn’t that ... We didn’t knock them down. I hate to say this, but it just becomes contagious. You start making free throws and other people make them. We struggle from the three-point line, and sometimes it works that way too. It became contagious for Auburn in a good way. They shot the cover off the ball and made some tough shots. The shot before the end of the half that [Allen] Flanigan made was a big shot. [It went from a] Five-point game to eight-point game and changed how each team felt going into the locker-room. They made a lot of three’s tonight.”

Q: What was it about Jaylin Williams tonight that made him so tough to guard?

CJ: “He’s a good player. We had a lot of respect for him coming into the game, and he just got going early. Sometimes, guys get in that rhythm and the basket looks bigger. He made early shots, and he certainly was a load for us tonight.”

Q: When you have poor shooting nights from the free throw line or three, can you use the contagiousness of good shooting nights to get these guys going?

CJ: “I hope so. Every game is its own book, and it will unfold the way it does. No one can predict the future like that. We will see. We’ve got a tough week with Tennessee coming in, and they’re not happy with the loss they had today. They’ll be rallying the troops, but we’re looking forward to being at The Hump and at home for a couple home games with our students back.”

Q: What's it like to coach in this league on the road?

CJ: “It’s about what I expected. There are tough environments, good coaches and great players. You’ve got to play well on the road. If you play well, they’re not as loud. If you don’t play well and the other team gets going, the crowd becomes a factor. It sounds simple, but that’s just the way it is. I thought our guys handled it really well. I didn’t think they got rattled. They handled the crowd and the environment. They showed a lot of fight but just didn’t get it done.”

Forward Tolu Smith

Q: How do you feel like you guys played tonight as a team?

TS: "I think defensively we played pretty well. We stopped most of their go-to plays. They like to run the flex action a lot, and I think we stopped that. We forced a good amount of turnovers. We forced 20 turnovers. So, I think we did a good job on that end."

Q: How did you feel about the halftime improvements you guys made?

TS: "Personally, I have to do a better job especially in the first half, of limiting turnovers. In the first half, I feel like we could've had the game at 25-24 but instead it was a bigger deficit. If we would've had it within one or were up one, it would've been a better turnout for us in our favor. Still, you've got to give Auburn credit."

Q: There have been a lot of close games especially on the road not going your way. What can you guys do to start turning that around soon?

TS: "Honestly, just going back to the lab and going back to the drawing board and figuring out things we need to work on. Obviously, it's turnovers, shooting and free throw shooting, but there were some positives in this week. We didn't turn the ball over as much the last two games, but this game we had 16. We just have to work on things like that. They shot the ball really well. So, it's just running them off the line and things of that nature. There's a lot of things we need to work on."

Q: What clicked for you guys at the free throw line tonight?

TS: "Coach Jans. Before the game, he was showing me other routines and figuring out things of that nature. For the other players, it's just that in the heat of the moment we know we need those free throws. We're always harping on those free throws, and we know we have to make them. Coach Jans has helped me a lot with those. He hired himself back [as my free throw coach]."

Q: This is one of the toughest environments you've played in so far. Does this tough environment help you guys down the road?

TS: "I don't know that it was the toughest environment, but it was a good environment. I thought Tennessee was a good environment as well. Honestly, it was just a good game overall from the start to the finish. I thought we scrapped really well. I think Auburn gave us a good shot, and they came out in the second half really hot. Like I said, give credit to Auburn and credit to Coach Pearl."