

2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State vs. No. 2 Alabama – January 25, 2023

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: You prefer to push the ball and not give the defense a chance to get set. Is that what you saw at the end of this game?

CJ: "Hindsight's 20-20. I just talked to the radio about it. I know the timeout folks are going to be on me, and I get all that. I've got pretty big shoulders, and I understand there will be plenty of people pointing fingers at me. All I know is 31 years, and I've been on teams that have won so many games in those scramble situations. I'm not trying to defend it. Everyone has different philosophies when it comes to end of the game situations. I'm not a hard and fast if we're going to play every time, or if we're going to call a timeout every time. It's just more of a feel thing for me."

"We had a play call. We hadn't run that play in the game yet. Unfortunately, we didn't execute it. It wasn't what we were trying to run. Once that happened, it became a scramble situation. There's just so many things when you call timeout that the other team can employ especially when you get down to 8 or 7 [seconds]. They're going to foul you. It's hard to win those games when it's a three-point game. They can change defenses. They can run zone. They can sub. They can tell their guys to foul, and I'm sure they wanted to late. You can't relay that information when the ball is live like that and especially on the other end. In hindsight, I get it. I should've called timeout. Again, my experience has been that most teams I have coached are better off when we haven't."

Q: What did you see from these guys tonight that indicates that they're better than their record shows?

CJ: "It doesn't matter. We're not here to have a good showing or to be close. We came here to win. We're disappointed, and our kids are disappointed. Our staff is disappointed. I knew we'd have to play well, and we did for a long time. We also knew they weren't going to go away. They're ranked number two in the country for a reason. They've assembled a great group of guys and great players that do a good job. Nobody remembers what the score was, but they remember who won and who lost. That's what we're going to remember."

Q: Welch hit that three pointer before halftime. How much did that affect you guys going into the locker room?

CJ: "It wasn't ideal. I know him. He has a reputation as a shooter, but he had been struggling. We had been baiting him into shooting it. We had to live with it because of all the other players on the court. I think he made two in the first half, and I think he was 2-for-18 coming into the game. I know he can shoot the ball."

"I think in the last game Colin Castleton [for Florida] was 1-for-10. He made a three against us, and Reeves for Florida hadn't been shooting very well. He was 10 percent or lower, and he made a couple. Everyone always thinks that it just happens to them. I know it happens to a lot of programs, but it seems like the last couple of games we've played the percentages, and it hasn't worked out in our favor."

Q: How do you leave this frustration in the past as you're looking forward to TCU?

CJ: "It's our job, and that's how it is. We'll certainly going to have to wear this one. It's going to be a long night. We'll start working on them on the bus ride home. My staff is obviously way ahead, and tomorrow we'll figure out a theme. We'll get our guys off the mat, dusted off and get our minds right. That's just the way it is. It's how college athletics work and how team sports work. We got to get out of it and move on."

Q: You put Shakeel Moore in the starting lineup tonight. Was this a matchup thing or a move you would like to see moving forward?

CJ: "I don't know about moving forward. It wasn't a matchup thing. It was just time. We felt like we needed to switch it up. We liked them the two of them out there together [Moore and Dashawn Davis]. When you're in the midst of what we're in the middle of, you try to shake it up a little bit at times to get a little bit different rhythm and a little bit different start."

"We had a great start. Getting back to the halftime shot, no question that hurt us. It didn't have an effect in the second half. We came out and reestablished ourselves. We got up more than seven for a long period of time. I was really proud of them, and how they handled their runs. I thought about calling a timeout a couple of times when it got really loud, and they overtook us. I think we had a couple possessions there where we quieted them down with some big shots and some nice offensive possessions. I'm really proud of them being able to stick together in a hostile environment like that."

Q: Saturday commemorates the 60th anniversary of the game of change. What does that mean to you and the guys in this program?

CJ: "I'm looking forward to being a part of it. We've got four living members from that particular team. They will all be back in Starkville. We are certainly going to honor them. I've reached out to our people. As much as they want to be around our team to address them, be introduced to them, or whatever they would like, we're going to make them feel a part of this particular team. I've done some research coming into this game. I didn't know a lot about it until I arrived here. It's a remarkable story. It was a historic game for Mississippi State and for college basketball. I look forward to celebrating that game on Saturday."

Q: What do you say to someone like Eric Reed Jr. when has been struggling and you're trying to help him find a groove?

CJ: "You just try to help him. It's easy for us as we're watching, and we're not in the frenzy situation of what it is at the end of the game. Certainly, no one feels worse than him that we shot that two instead of a three. Knowing Eric's toughness, character, and what he's about, it's going to bother him. He's one of the guys, like most of our guys, who we will have to pick up off the mat and get his mind moving in the right direction."

Forward Tolu Smith

Q: What was clicking in the first half to build that 11-point lead?

TS: "We told ourselves before the game that we have to make shots. We went into practice knowing that we had to hit some three's. They go under our ball screens, and it kind of opened up a lot of things for us."

Q: What did Alabama do to take control of the game in the second half.

TS: "It was just defensive breakdowns. I had one. I should not have come up when we were in our press, and they threw the alley-oop above my head. That was one of them. Some turnovers that we had, they converted on those. They slowly kept pushing and got back in the game and the lead."

Q: In terms of being able to play through that crowd, how locked in were y'all coming into the game.

TS: "It was good. If we play like that for 40 minutes in every game, we would be good. It's about [who] punches first. Whoever comes out first and punches the other in the mouth. We came out swinging. I have to give Alabama credit where it's due. They played really well."

Q: How frustrating is it when none of these close games adds up to a win?

TS: "It's obviously frustrating. Words can't really describe how frustrating it is. I know as a captain and as a leader that I have to hold myself accountable and keep the team motivated. This was a great opportunity for us, and we just didn't execute. We just have to go onto the next one. TCU is another big opportunity."

Q: As a veteran guy, what's the message that you guys try to send in the locker room to keep the confidence up.

TS: "We just tell our guys that our record doesn't indicate how good we are. That might sound really cliché, but it's true. This is the number two team in the nation, and we lost by three. This is a game we should've won. We play like that for 40 minutes, the outcome will be different in most games. We just have to go back to the drawing board and figure it out."