

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

### **Mississippi State vs. No. 11 TCU – January 28, 2023**

#### **Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans**

##### ***Q: What was the atmosphere like in the locker room after the win?***

**CJ:** “For me, it was a bit of an exhale. For the guys, they were super excited and joyous celebrating the win. Pregame, we didn’t talk about much, but I told them how proud I was of them during this stretch. It can be easy to start listening to the noise and to other people. I understand how that works. You start questioning things, like who should be playing, and what you should be running. Players, internally, can start questioning that as well. I get it, it’s human nature. It’s part of the job.”

“What I could see for the most part, [is that] they had stuck together and kept working. Our practice intensity hadn’t dropped. Our focus was good for everybody, not just the guys playing the minutes. It’s so impressive to be around young people, that even when they are not playing, and the team is not doing as well, continue to stay the course. To work, to get better and to think big picture all the time. It’s not just this game or even this season if you’re trying to make this a profession one day. That’s all I could think about in the locker room because of how excited they were. They kept with it. I have never been around it when it hasn’t been like that, but I imagine it’s not a lot of fun if you start letting that affect your everyday habits.”

##### ***Q: What did you see from Tolu Smith to flush the last game out and move forward with a big game tonight?***

**CJ:** “He got single coverage most of the night. So, that certainly helps. For the most part, it felt like he had a size advantage down there. He got going early. Most of us are built that way. When you get the ball going in early, your confidence soars. Our guys, sometimes to a fault, were trying to get him the ball. They knew he was cooking. He was so efficient, and that’s what sticks out the most.”

“If you look at his line across the board, he played well at every level. He created shots for other guys, in and out three’s and had a bunch of assists. Individually, you can never argue that he’s our hardest worker. He spends more unrequired time in the gym. Every coach will tell those young people that it will pay off eventually. Maybe not the next game or next week, just stay with the grind and reap the dividends. It was one of those days for him.”

##### ***Q: What confidence can this team gain from seeing Dashawn Davis and Shakeel Moore hit threes like they did?***

**CJ:** “Wasn’t that fun when the ball splashes through the net like that? I had a conversation with Shak mid-game. He has a beautiful shot fake to the point where he uses it a lot. I think he can go to it too much. He’s got to shoot that ball for us because he can shoot it. I was barking at him a little bit in one of the timeouts that when you get those catch-and-shoot opportunities, quit turning them down. He’s good at getting in the paint and creating for others, but we needed to get some shots up when he was in rhythm. With Rams [Dashawn Davis], we see it every day. He’s a very capable three-point shooter. He’s been that way all year long. I’m glad the ball went through the hole for both of those guys.”

##### ***Q: When you have talks in timeouts late game, do you talk about the struggles you guys have been trying to break through?***

**CJ:** “We talked about it tonight, we don’t always though. When the under-four minute basically stopped and got us off our routine, we tried to set the table. We said we’ve been in this situation a lot, and there’s no more time to make up for it. We’ve got to execute. Whatever we call, we must be on the same page. We must do our jobs, offensively, defensively and in special situations et cetera.

We tried to really zone in on them, make eye contact with them and get them together. We did address staying the course and being assigned correct and executing whatever we were in."

***Q: How big was Tyler Stevenson tonight during that first-half run?***

**CJ:** "I have no idea if the camera was on me or if anyone caught it, but I don't smile as much as often in the games as I should. I was ear-to-ear when he had the and-one. I've never seen him that excited, he just let a lot of emotions out. It was cool to see. He's a nice young man and works his tail off. For him to have a moment like that, he really helped us win the game. He had some huge minutes, huge plays. That and-one in front of the student section where he also got to celebrate with his teammates was a cool moment for me to watch."

***Q: The team had 23 assists by eight guys, what was your team doing to be successful against a great defensive team?***

**CJ:** "I made it to the coaches' locker room with Coach Brooks before anyone else got there, and that was the first thing I said to him. 23 assists on 29 baskets, that percentage is what stuck out to me. That goes to what I said right away, the team sticking together and staying the course. If they're going off on their own and getting unassisted baskets, you can't win that way. A team that's staying together and sharing the ball, our team hasn't done that. Certainly, the assist total goes up when you score the baskets. We've been struggling with that a bit so that can hurt our assist total as well."

***Q: What did it mean having that loud crowd behind you?***

**CJ:** "I probably shouldn't admit this but before the game starts, it takes forever to come out and start. You do all the pageantry. I get it, but it takes a long time. You can stay focused, but you can have some moments there ... I know how it works. If you're not winning at the level everyone expects you to, people don't show up quite as much. I was super impressed with the number of people that were here."

"I said to one of the coaches, if we were constantly winning, it'd be loud every night. That type of environment was here, and it makes you feel good that they're sticking with us. They appreciate how the guys are competing and playing, even though the results are not what everyone wants. The students have continued to be awesome. At the end of the game, when they had the pom-poms going, it was such a cool environment. I pointed to a few of them there, even before the game started, which I don't usually do. I just want them to know we appreciate them coming out, supporting us, and hopefully they'll continue as we get back into SEC play."

***Q: What did it mean to have the Game of Change group back and have them mingle among your team?***

**CJ:** "I was looking forward to being a part of it and meeting those gentlemen that made their way back to Starkville. One was running late, so I only got to meet three of them. We had the team get here earlier than normal. I educated the guys who didn't know about the Game of Change, and the historical perspective for college basketball. Certainly, for Mississippi State and our program. We went through what they and Coach McCarthy did. The risk they took to make that happen for our basketball team."

"To be able to meet those guys that were there and were on the team was cool. We introduced them and had them speak to us about Mississippi State. They've been following us, which was cool. They knew our team and had some nice things to say to me afterwards. I'm glad I heard the ovation was off the charts, and it was cool to be a part of it."

**Guard Shakeel Moore and Forward Tolu Smith**

***Q: What was being emphasized in the huddle as you guys were trying to close it out?***

**SM:** "I would just say finishing out. Winning plays, executing on the defensive end and just honing in on our defensive possessions. Just getting rebounds, checking out and stopping second-chance opportunities for them."

***Q: They were without Eddie Lampkin Jr. today. How much was it a point of emphasis for you was it to get inside and maybe try attack in the paint and get the 27 points you had?***

**TS:** "I guess it was a big emphasis. I don't want to be cocky, but I don't think it would've mattered. We still would've executed and played how we played. But yeah, I saw that Mike Miles had gone down. I'm praying for him. Shout out to their team and their program."

***Q: How much does this win mean for the program going forward?***

**SM:** "A whole lot actually. We're looking to make a full 180 on our season. Things haven't been going our way. But like Coach said we continue to stick together, continue to fight together and things can happen as you have seen tonight."

***Q: Can you guys exhale having finally closed a team out?***

**TS:** "Definitely, it's a big exhale. Not just for us, but for the fans and for the people watching at home. We're just glad to execute and finish on-top. I'm just happy not just for myself, but for my team and my coaches. They put so many countless hours in the scout. We put so many countless hours in on the court. Many people don't know what we go through every day, day in and day out. I'm just excited and happy for us."

***Q: What were you seeing in overtime with those back-to-back three's?***

**SM:** "I wouldn't say it was more so seeing anything. I just felt the energy from our fans and our sixth man. They brought the energy, and it brought the confidence for us. We executed so I threw down."

***Q: Tolu, when you announced you were coming back this season, and you said you wanted to leave behind a legacy. What does it mean for you?***

**TS:** "Man, shout out to the crowd. They're sticking with us and standing together with us. I'm just happy for that, but what you said, it's just building a legacy. I just think it starts with winning, just finishing those tough games and sticking together like we've been. I think we've got a great chance to do something special this year. "

***Q: Shak, what did you think about that base line out of bounds play and draw back 3 from Rams [Dashawn Davis]? What do you think of that design and how it went down?***

**SM:** "I knew he was going to hit it. Like you said, we work on that for countless hours. We work on executing that play, and Coach called a good one. I knew Rams was going to knock it down. He shot it with confidence. He had made two prior to that, and he executed it. It was definitely a great shot."

***Q: Tolu, how were you able to clear your head after the frustration of the Alabama game?***

**TS:** "Honestly, I've got some amazing teammates. I've got Cameron Matthews. He always tells me 'You've got 24 hours. Then, you've got to let it go.' I sulk for a few hours, just let it go and then onto the next game. That's how it's been the whole season. Win or lose, we've just got to keep going."

***Q: What does this win mean for turning your season around?***

**SM:** "It does a lot. If I'm not mistaken, that's a quad-1 win, and we needed it. It means a lot. Like I said, it's going to initiate the 180 to our season. We're going to focus on the next one to try to get the dub [win]."

**TCU Head Coach Jamie Dixon**

***Q: Your team was a lot of men down. Isn't that tough to do that especially on the road against a SEC team?***

**JD:** "Yeah, but no excuses. Like I told our guys, we need to find a way. You don't just get outrebounded by nine. That's not the answer. So, it didn't go our way. We came in some guys down, and we've got to be prepared. This happens to everybody. You've got to find a way to get it done and getting outrebounded isn't the answer."

"We shot too many three's and didn't execute offensively. Maybe, it's because we got some guys playing some different positions. I don't know if I handled it as well as I wish we would have or thought or hoped. That's on me to have them prepared for certain situations. I thought they were, but I don't think we did a good enough job."

***Q: Do you think their strategy was to pound it more inside to Tolu Smith especially without Eddie Lampkin in the game?***

**JD:** "That's what they do all the time. I didn't know Eddie's situation as we prepared for the last three days. They were going to do this. He's their leading scorer, and it was no surprise. I wish we would have done a better job. It was atrocious. I have to look at myself, and I have to have us more prepared with a difference scheme."

"I thought we did a little better as the game went on, but we dug a hole for ourselves. We get the lead [in the second half]. Then, we have poor execution down the stretch. I was disappointed in our offense. You can't have a tipped ball turn into a three. You can't free throw lane violation. Those are the things that you just can't have."

***Q: Do you feel your defensive pressure sped up the game a little bit in the second half?***

**JD:** "A little bit, but I thought we were doing that in the first half too. We didn't get as many in the first half because we weren't getting to the foul line. We did fight back. We dug a hole, but we fought back. Mike [Miles] going out probably had an effect on some guys. I told the team he was fine at halftime. I shouldn't say fine, but he felt better. We'll see what the MRI says on this. Certainly, a situation where we've got to gather around, and we've got to rally up. We've got to get guys to execute, maybe play a different position or maybe play more minutes. I go back to rebounding and our shot selection."

***Q: Coach, you were in a unique situation trying to get 45 minutes out of Damon Baugh and 39 out of Shahada Wells.***

**JD:** "Obviously, we're in a unique situation. You throw in overtime, and you've got to be better. I just don't know why we were outrebounded to the number that we were. They're a good team. They started out well. They're big, they're physical and we never really got them into foul trouble. They established the inside early, and I was disappointed in how that occurred."

***Q: Now, you have a quick turn to a team that you already played in West Virginia.***

**JD:** "Yeah, but it's a similar team. We really compared this team to West Virginia in trying to prepare our guys. So, we turn around, and we got West Virginia. They [the game at West Virginia and this one] really were the same games to be honest with you. Slow starts in both and outrebounded throughout. We've got an opportunity to rebound. Hopefully, this is the second lesson that we have, and we've got to go do something about it."