

2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Quotes – Barstool Sports Invitational Mississippi State vs. Akron – November 11, 2022

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: The team was leading the whole first half. Then, you fall behind by a point with 16 minutes left. Some teams would've crumbled, but you took off. From your vantage point, what was the message and what changed?

CJ: "It wasn't like the other night when we came out of halftime and played really well. We were down that game though. Tonight, we got ourselves an eight-point cushion, and we relaxed. We made some silly plays and allowed them to get back in the game, but I thought that was the best part of the game in the end. We faced some adversity with the score again."

"Huddles were good. They were tighter and guys were starting to say the right things to each other about sticking together, sticking to the plan and taking it one possession at a time. I thought the response from the guys once they made a big run and we found ourselves down was really good. That was my favorite part of the night."

Q: Speak to what Tolu was and him being a leader on the floor tonight.

CJ: "He's established himself down low. He's such a luxury to have to be able to throw the ball down in the paint and see how they're going to defend it. We're going to see every post entry defense there is throughout the year. Some nights, they'll double him and try to make him give it up. Teams will try to make him turn it over, and make other guys beat you. Other nights, they're going to play him one-on-one depending on how much belief they have in their guy. That will be the chess match each and every game."

"We've already seen different coverages in two games, but he'll get better with passing the ball. He had a couple [passes] that were lollipops across the court. He's working on it. He knows it's coming, and we know it's coming. As a team, part of who we are is throwing it in there and playing through him. We'll have to adjust to all the coverages that we're going to get as the season goes on."

Q: Rams [Dashawn Davis] didn't start tonight, but he sure fought hard through that game and gave you some production.

CJ: "What a gutty performance. He hasn't practiced since the [Texas A&M] Corpus Christi game. He actually hurt his ankle early in the second half and didn't tell anybody. We didn't see it, and I didn't see it until I watched it [on film] the next day. He hasn't practiced since, and he's been doing rehab each and every day since we played on Monday. He was going to be a gametime decision."

"Our athletic trainer Andrew Kegley and Dashawn worked tirelessly to get him back on the court. He gave us a gutty performance. If you watched him closely, he was limping around pretty good ... I'm proud of him, the way he played. He kept it in himself, and he didn't get sped up. Maybe that ankle injury will remind him how playing slow on offense and how it worked for him. I'm so proud of him."

Q: D.J. Jeffries already seems like a more confident player than last year. Is it just a matter of him finding that confidence and playing with that confidence or was there something different that he was doing?"

CJ: "I'm not sure, you would have to ask him. I'm still getting to know him and a lot of the guys. We haven't been together forever, and we're starting to get to know each other better especially now that the games are upon us. Practice and personality as a team and a coach are one thing. You get to the games, and they're different. We're going to evolve as one go individually."

"I loved how D.J. played tonight. The only negative is he's got to get better on his rebounding. He's long, he's athletic and he's got a feel for the game. He just hasn't been rebounding at the level he needs to and that we expect him to. Hopefully, he can get that into the game because that would really help us."

Q: What have you seen from Dashawn Davis so far shooting wise through two games?

CJ: "We knew him in junior college, and we recruited him while we were at New Mexico State. We looked at all his numbers closely, and we talked to people that had coached him previously. We looked at the video. Looking at everything, he was structurally sound."

"Last year, he was put in a really tough spot where he had to take a lot of shots and his percentages showed that. Oregon State had a tough year last year, and I think he just had to take a lot of shots. He's playing with confidence now. He's shooting the ball well since he arrived. I told everyone I expect him to shoot the ball well this season, and he's off to a great start thus far."

Q: "When your team shooting well from three, do you think it opens up the offense and allows Tolu to get some good looks?"

CJ: "I would think so. Everybody has got to pick their poison. Some coaches say they want to play one-on-one, and two's are better than three's. Some coaches are going to gameplan to shut the inside down. Then, we have to gameplan to pass the ball around, to find the open man and to knock it down. We did that tonight. We didn't take a ton of them, but I was impressed with our shot selection tonight. It was better than it was on Monday. Hopefully, that will continue as well."

Q: How can you build off this performance going into the next game?

CJ: "It's a quick turnaround, and we have to play at 2 p.m. on Sunday. It's against a team that most people think will be an easy game, but it's not. If you have been following Pine Bluff, Monday night they lost by one to TCU who is a top 15 team. If the last second shot goes in, it's one of the biggest upsets in college basketball so far this season. They're going to play with a lot of confidence. It's going to be a quick turnaround for us, and we will have to be ready to go."

Forwards D.J. Jeffries and Tolu Smith

Q: Take us through what you saw in the second half. You were on the bench when the team made that long run. What was that like seeing that from your teammates?"

TS: "I was so ecstatic and so happy that everybody was making shots, defending and rebounding. I was just excited for my team."

Q: You guys have been great defensively as a team these first two games. How has coach Jans pushed that on the team this first season?"

DJJ: "Since day one, he's been making defense our focal point. He wants us to go out there, pressure people and beat them with our defense. He wants us to let defense create our offense. That's what we did tonight. I know we started out slow, but in the second half we got out there, got a couple [defensive] kills and we took off from there."

Q: What did you see from them early on? You had a size advantage over them, but what was making it so easy for you to score in the paint?

TS: "It was my teammates giving me the ball in the right spots, and it was me trying to make the right reads and fight through the double teams. They sent double teams early. So, I was just trying to make the right reads. I had some bad turnovers, and I've got to work on it."

Q: You guys got down by a point early in the second half and then got on a run. What keyed that run to not get down on yourselves and really pull away?"

DJJ: "The game of basketball is a game of runs. I told the guys during the timeout that they gave us their best punch. We've just got to keep pushing. We knew that we were the better team. So, we've got to come out there and respond to adversity. So, that's what we did. We came back out and punched them right in the mouth."

Q: How big is it to get experience playing away from home?

TS: "It was great to play on the road. We have a couple guys from around this area. So, just to have a little support system, family and friends come out to enjoy the game is exciting."

Q: How can you guys build off this experience going into your next game?

TS: "We need to pick up where we left off and keep the momentum going. We need to tweak the little things and go back to the drawing board. We need to make sure we correct the little things like defensive breakdowns and the turnovers that we had. We've got to keep building off this momentum we got."