

2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. South Dakota – November 17, 2022

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: What are your thoughts on the first half defense and overall rebounding efforts?

CJ: “We talked a lot pregame about trying to get our defense in the game from the jump. We knew we were going to be more athletic, and we wanted them to feel us physically on that end of the floor – just being athletic and guarding the ball in closeouts and checks.”

“I thought we did that for the most part, certainly in the first half and even throughout the game. Our rebounding, we talked about at halftime, it wasn’t up to snuff. We gave up seven offensive rebounds, which is way too many. As you all know, we’ve been talking about in here recently about how it’s something we choose to be good at, and work on every day. Yet, we’re not. That’s disappointing, but we were better. Obviously, we’re going to be playing against better athletes here real soon.”

Q: What do you think of Cam Matthews’ performance, and how he was able to get to the lane more often?

CJ: “I thought he got some rebounds off the backboard and pushed the ball. We allow him to do it, and it opens up our game. He picked his spots a little better. Recently, he’s been picking and popping, then holding the ball to try to drive against a set defense. Tonight, I thought he caught it and ripped it. He was more efficient with his choices he made with the basketball. He also got up on the glass and got some tip backs. That’s what he’s going to do. He’s not going to be a one trick pony where he only does one thing. Obviously, he’s a really good defender. He can run and all that stuff. Everyone sees that, but if he has nights where he can score the ball for us, that’s really going to help us on that end of the floor.”

Q: How do you feel about DJ Jeffries’ level of play right now?

CJ: “It’s funny – coaches are always talking about how you play like you practice. Certainly, I’m one of those guys too. He’s had a different bounce to his step the last three or four days. I’m not sure why. I didn’t ask him, but he’s been different in a good way. I don’t know if it’s that the buy in is all the way in now, or if his personal life is just going great right now, but he just has a little bit different look to him. In practice, the coaches have all commented to each other that he just looks a little different. He looked efficient for the most part. He took the one shot in the right corner early that wasn’t a great shot, but other than that he played within himself. We’ve put more on him lately. Tonight, he had the ball in his hands more than he has in the past. He’s proven to us that he can make good decisions with the ball, and he’s got the size and vision to make others better. Hopefully, that’ll be something that will continue.”

Q: Did you expect your team to be so successful on the offensive glass tonight?

CJ: “I did – we wouldn’t have had as many if we made more shots. We wouldn’t have had them available to us if we could make some more especially from the three-point line and the free throw line. It’s something we emphasize and talk about every practice and game. We keep track of who’s crashing and who’s not. We use that to try to motivate them. If they want to stay on the court, they need to get active on the backboards. We track that every practice, and that’s one of the qualities we have right now. We have some guys that can move, have some length and beat some checks. Hopefully, they can continue to be hungry on the backboards.”

Q: How important is it to get the students and fans behind you, to get them to pack the Hump?

CJ: “When you watch everybody that gets a job in college basketball, they’re all going to talk about connecting with the students. I can’t imagine a coach out there that gets a job that doesn’t talk about connecting with the community or fanbase. We just wanted to have action, and it isn’t the first time I’ve been over there [in Greek life]. We’re trying to create a buzz, trying to connect with them and trying to touch them.”

“We care that they’re there, we want to acknowledge them for supporting these kids that are playing their heart out, and we want to create an environment. Not that we don’t want everybody else that’s a Bulldog fan that’s willing and able to come to these games, but I think it starts with our student base. We’ve got so many students in close proximity that love their Bulldogs, and I thought they were great tonight. They showed out. I have no idea how many extra of them came because we made the rounds, but we’re going to continue to find ways to connect with our students and let them know how important they are to what we’re trying to do.”

Q: What are your thoughts on Jamel Horton Jr., and how he’s played his role especially with Dashawn Davis out tonight?

CJ: “I thought Mel [Horton Jr.] was good, and he was the point guard tonight in terms of being an extension of me on the court. You always want that in your point guards. He had a really nice look to him in the huddles. He was locked in and focused. We played Shakeel Moore, a little more at the point than we were maybe would have with Rams [Dashawn Davis] out, and we also played D.J. [Jeffries] at the point for six or seven positions. We’ve been tinkering with him as a secondary ball handler, and we like his size and vision out there.”

“Rams [Davis] is doing fine; I think he probably could have played tonight, but he tried to practice yesterday and is just not there. He’s hobbling around. So, we shut him down. We don’t want this to be a lingering issue that takes weeks to get over. He’s certainly day-to-day, and hopefully he’ll be back soon.”

Q: What stands out about Marquette on Monday and how do you feel?

CJ: “It’s going to be fun. We’re going to see where we’re at one way or another. It’s time in the season for us to play a team like them. I have no idea what the result is going to be, but we need to be challenged. We’re definitely going to be exposed in some areas of the game, and who knows what that’s going to be, but we’re going to find out after Monday and Wednesday with the quality teams we’re playing about where we’re at and what we need to work on. Our team needs to play that quality of competition. We’ve watched some film on them, and they’re really good. They’re in mid-season form and just went over to Purdue. They had every chance to win that game in a really tough environment. So, it’s going to be a heck of a challenge for us.”

Q: What did you learn from the first quick turnaround this season that you can use Monday and Wednesday?

CJ: “They’ve [the players] been really good about the mental part of staying focused, locking into this report and the things we do on the court to understand the tweaks we make to our schemes on offense and defense. We’re still in the infant stages of a marathon season, but I like where we’re at – how they pick up the information we’re giving them. This won’t be the first time, and the difference is last time we had to travel back home. This will be a good week for us. I’m anxious, and I’m looking forward to playing in these types of tournaments because they just feel different. With the size of the teams and the quality of the teams we’re playing, it’s going to be a heck of a challenge for us.”

Forwards Cameron Matthews and Justin Rumph

Q: In the first half, you guys held them to 15 percent shooting, Coach Jans preaches defense but talk about what you guys have done on that end in the first four games?

CM: "We've tried to enforce our will on them, be in the passing lanes, muddy everything up and be athletic and long."

Q: We see you contribute a lot of different ways this season and got the scoring up today. What were you seeing, what was helping your shot?

CM: "It would've been better if Tolu wasn't fiending, but I'll take second today. Everything was going for me today, and I played aggressive."

Q: A couple of weeks ago when we talked to Tolu, he said that your defensive energy is contagious and Shakeel Moore said the same thing. How do you feel being the anchor of the Mississippi State defense?

CM: "I'm just trying to help the team in whatever way I can. If that's just being the defensive voice, the anchor, I'll just do whatever they need me to do."

Q: Justin, you guys were 4-0 last year, you're 4-0 this year, what's the biggest difference thus far just in the way the teams playing and the attitude around the team?

JR: "Everybody is hungry on defense, defense wins games. We've got a lot of hustle on the team."

Q: You come in and knock down those two three-pointers right away, what was it like getting that crowd reaction?

JR: "All glory be to God; it was a blessing. The first shot I shot, I saw it go in. So, I had to shoot the second one."

Q: We saw you taking the pictures with the students dressed as bananas after the game. How big is it to have a student section that cares?

CM: "It's great. Me personally as a player, I feed off the energy of the crowd so the more people the better we're going to play. Pack The Hump."

Q: What was it about Chris Jans and his staff that you wanted to come back and have a night like this?

JR: "It's how caring he is. He cares for everybody on the team no matter who you are. I just couldn't leave, I wanted to be a Bulldog my last year."

Q: The team had 21 offensive rebounds on the night which is a ridiculous number, what making it so effective to get those second chance points

CM: "Just making sure we go crash every time. We know we're not going to make every shot so just us being there, and being stronger and faster, we try to enforce our will and crash every time. Most of them just came to us."

South Dakota Head Coach Eric Peterson

Q: Talk about Mississippi State's start, and how they controlled the rhythm?

EP: "Yeah, they're a very good team. They're giving out 48 points a game. I kind of expected it might be tough for us to score some points and the huge deal for us was trying to take care of the ball and get good shots. Of course, they scored 30 points off of our turnovers. Out of our 17 turnovers, 14 of them were steals."

"They did what they're very good at, and we didn't do a very good job of taking care of the ball. Now, it's really hard to simulate their length, and their pressure in practice. It was real tonight. I told the guys in the locker room after the game, we're going to play a team in Fort Myers that's going to be very similar to how they defend ... We'll get those looks again at some point against a mid-major team, and we will make them. We're just trying to find some positives. They're a really good team. Coaching at this level, they're going to win a lot of games in the SEC – a lot of games in my opinion."

Q: You talk about the turnovers and their length. There were times tonight where it looked like that length would shut down the passing lane quickly. Can you discuss that further?

EP: "Yeah, the window is so much smaller with their length. You experience that really fast. You think that pass is there, and they jump it and it's two points the other way. I thought we did a good job in the second half, we only had six turnovers. Finding positives – we had six turnovers which was better than the first. We had 16 paint points in the second half – we had two in the first. We had 11 assists against a team like that, that's good."

"We're going to go and chart potential assists. I think our guys made a lot of the right passes in the right plays, we just didn't make those shots like I said. We'll make those against teams at our level, but they're so good defensively, giving up 48 points a game. It's a really tough match up for us with their athleticism."

Q: Did you feel like a couple of the guys maybe started pressing too much when they started missing some of those shots

EP: "When you play the highest level, the window to score is so much shorter. The closeouts – they may be way off us, but they close off so much faster. So, we think we have to get it off so much quicker. We kind of rushed some of those shots, especially in the first half and slowed ourselves down a little bit more in the second half."

"Scoring 15 points in the first half is pretty humbling. We got to 42, but man, they're so good defensively. Trying to find some positives, I thought our ball screen defense was excellent. If you look at our halfcourt defense on film, it may not look like it on the scoreboard, but it was really good. We just couldn't get a rebound. [They had] 21 offensive rebounds. Did we stop them on their initial stuff? Yes, we guarded them right. Then, they get the rebound and a put back. It's a lot of momentum going in their way. Our double teams were good. I thought our guys did a really good job with the scout overall. It just came down to rebounding and taking care of the ball which, we talked about pregame. We just didn't manage to get it. "

Q: This really is a tough trip. Long travel day yesterday, the guys tried to get their bodies ready. Now we'll go home late late tonight and turn around and be ready in a couple of days- what do you want to see out of this group here over the next couple of days?

EP: "Just trying to stay positive with our group. Our two losses are against really good teams – a Big Ten team [Wisconsin] and a very good SEC team [Mississippi State]. You come back and tighten some stuff up defensively. There were some adjustments that we made that we just couldn't

handle. We played a little zone for the first time, and I think we'll probably go to that a little bit more against more athletic teams. We'll work on that. But, overall, just trying to rest up, getting healthy and going down to Fort Myers and competing for a championship.