

2022-23 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State vs. Omaha – November 28, 2022

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: Do you think there was any offense improvement today compared to previous games? Obviously, you shot a better percentage, but I wanted to know what you thought of the offense today.

CJ: "It will never be aesthetically pleasing when people play off you so much. It's hard, the natural decision to make is shoot the ball when you're open. What we keep on talking about is that if people are going to keep guarding us that way, let's explore what we really want first. We can always get that [certain shots] later. As a young person with pride and in the game, that's not really the mentality that they have ... I do believe in the end we're going to make shots. I watch them in practice every day and it becomes contagious. We're going to have a breakout game here. We're going to make more shots consistently."

"We made some three's tonight, we shot 33 percent from three which is unfortunately is our average right now. It's not like we show 15 or 20 percent. People are going to make us do that and prove that we can shoot the ball from the outside. Certainly, Tolu (Smith) has something to do with that as well. You play him one-on-one most nights, but I'll have to watch the film to really tell you if we were any better on offense or not."

Q: When you can beat by 20 points and be able to tell your team that you're disappointed in their defense. What does that say in the standards that you are setting and what they are capable of doing in the end?

CJ: "Well, most coaches feel that way. Most coaches are coaching against the game. That's what we talked about at halftime. It's not just who we're playing, but it's also against the game. We're trying to be the best we can. With the best game as the standard each time we step on the floor, it's hard to understand that as young people. It's our job to get them to feel that way and respond in kind."

"It's just the expectation we have had since we've arrived that we're going to be everyday guys, and we're going to be about the right stuff and play the right way. Certainly, we make mistakes each and every day. For the most part the fans and everyone who watches us every day would agree that the kids are playing hard and flying around. They're trying to do the right thing. As a coach, that's what we're asking for. At the same time, my job is to ask for more and get greedy and to become a better coach."

Q: Obviously with your two point guards out, you had D.J. Jeffries running some point forward. What did you see from him taking on a different role tonight?

CJ: "I think he was excited. He likes it when the ball is in his hands. We've already toyed with it this season with some possessions with him at the point. Our two point guards [Dashawn Davis and Jamel Horton Jr.] out, he got to practice at the point for two days. He is comfortable out there, he's comfortable with the ball in his hands."

"I would say that tonight he did a really good job. He kept us organized, and he communicated to me more tonight than he usually would trying to be an extension of me. Which is one of the responsibilities of our point guards in our system. I think he did a really good job considering I don't know what he did in high school."

Q: KeShawn said when you came in and you first talked to him. You said that you knew about his offensive game, but it was about getting ready on the defensive end. What have you thought of him on both sides of the floor as he's getting more minutes and more playing time?

CJ: "It's pretty obvious, he's got a lot of talent for a guy his size. He shoots a high arching three. He's quick around the basket. I'm not comparing him to Tolu – Tolu's best quality is how quick he is under the basket. KeShawn has that quality as well. He moves and is comfortable in traffic. There's no question about it."

"KeShawn's been behind the eight-ball. He was hurt when I arrived. He didn't get to practice with us that much during the summer. He had some setbacks in the fall. Now, he's stacked some weeks together, and he's been healthy. He's started to get in that game shape. The defensive end is the ticket for him. He's been better lately. I've told him that – he's been in the stance, and he's had a little bit more grit in him. He's trying to do the right thing. Obviously, he got rewarded with more playing minutes tonight. It's great when it works out that way, and he took advantage of it. He can score the basketball. Obviously, as a team that struggles to score the ball at times, there's space for guys to put the ball in the hole."

Q: You mentioned a couple weeks ago about how important games are you're supposed to win, finding minutes for guys, and giving them that opportunity. How much more important was that tonight knowing you were shorthanded?

CJ: "We talked a lot about that prior to the game. Yesterday at practice, shootaround and pregame – this is why we practice the way we do. If you do this long enough, you understand that you're very rarely going to go through a season unscathed and have everyone available every single game. It's just not reality. It's a marathon season. Even though we're not wearing pads and helmets, it's a very physical game and a lot of things happen over the course of the season."

"Having everyone prepared and knowing that they'll have opportunities and getting them to buy into that is really important to me and my staff. Hopefully, I mean I can't speak for them, they understand that as well. Because of that, we say we're prepared. There's no one who's going to be freaking out about it. We're not going to miss a step. We're just going to move some pieces around a little bit. This is what I was talking about. These are your opportunities. Now, what are you going to do with it? You want more minutes? Then, play well, be productive and show me where you're at. I think for the most part, the guys who haven't been playing as many minutes are going to make decisions tough run on me and my staff as we go forward."

Q: Tolu has been rated best SEC player by KenPom so far. How has he played relative to your expectations this season?

CJ: "About what I expected. I was recorded many times saying if we wanted to be the type of team we want to be, he had to be a first-team all-league player. He's playing like it right now, and it's not even about what's on the stats sheet. They're beating him up down there. He's handling it, he doesn't complain, he fights off double teams and he's a willing passer. His assist-to-turnover ratio is much better at this point than it was last year."

"That was a big focal point for my staff and I when we arrived because we anticipated us wanting to play inside-out through him and anticipating some double teams. He's handled it really, really well. Certainly, like all of us, he can get better, but I really like where he's at."

Mississippi State Forward KeShawn Murphy and Tyler Stevenson

Q: Coming into this game shorthanded, talk about Coach Jans' message to you guys in the locker room tonight?

TS: "He emphasized that we're going to need everybody. That's the reason we practice a lot and practice hard is because you never know when stuff like that will happen. Guys go down, it happens all year. You just have to be ready for whoever steps up next."

KM: "The same thing that T-Steve said. He emphasizes how everybody goes down. It gave other players opportunities to step up and show what they can do in different moments during the game."

Q: Both of you guys were able to turn defense into offense tonight. You blocked some shots and were able to get control of some steals. Was that the message of Coach Jans in the locker room?

KM: "Yeah, [he told us to] score in transition and play defense. He said wasn't playing hard enough. So, he told us to turn up the intensity and play as a Bulldog."

Q: KeShawn, what was it like contributing a career-high eight points tonight?

KM: "It felt great, man. I'm just glad to be here with my new teammates and to show the Bulldog family what I can do."

Q: Tyler, you're new here to Mississippi State, but grew up in New Hope. What's it been like playing for the Bulldogs this year?

TS: "It's been a great experience playing with this group of guys and these coaches. The coaching staff and our players all believe in one another, and we all give each other confidence. That really helps out a lot making a new adjustment and a new home."

Q: How much pride do you take in the team's defense?

TS: "Defense has been a big thing for us. We just want to keep emphasizing that and make sure it stays on point. The offensive side is going to come. We just want to keep working hard in practice on the defensive stuff we need to. We want to keep getting [teams] under certain amounts of points, and to keep locking them up."

Q: What do you think it is that makes this defense top 10 statistically in the country?

KM: "Our togetherness and how we trust in one another. We trust the next man to have our back and we talk pretty well."

Omaha Head Basketball Coach Chris Crutchfield

Q: What were your initial thoughts after this game?

CC: "Well, I like the way we got off to a great start. We kind of packed it in on them and knew they weren't a great three-point shooting team. They want to get the ball to [Tolu] Smith as much as they can, and we neutralized him early in the game. We were able to make some shots down the stretch to play with them a little bit. I think there was a point there where they turned it up there defensively—their size and their athleticism though, it catches up to you."

Q: What happened the last couple of minutes in the first half there where they finally found a stride and Jeffries' three put them up 10?

CC: "Well, we had a lineup on the floor without Frankie [Fidler] because of foul trouble. We had a very different lineup on the floor. Sometimes, when that happens with a young team, they have a hard time scoring. They kind of turned it up a little bit more defensively, and we had a hard time getting into our offense later in the first half."

“That caused us some problems, especially with a young basketball team. We just have to learn and grow. There’s going to be times later on in the season where we’ve got lineups on the floor that have to get used to playing with each other.”

Q: Were you pleased with the way your team started out the second half?

CC: “No doubt. That’s one thing I like about our team. We got a bunch of guys who will compete and will fight, no matter what the score is. It’s encouraging when we get into league play that we have got a bunch of guys who will compete and fight the whole 40 minutes.”

Q: What are your thoughts on Tony Osbourne’s performance tonight?

CC: “He plays with so much poise and so much pace for a young guard. I played him at the point later on just to get him some experience there. He’s a skilled basketball player. He may not be the quickest or the biggest, but he knows how to play. He knows how to put the ball in the hole, and he makes good decisions. He just continues to grow and get better and see these types of athletes that he’s playing against. He can gage it and know how to get his shots off.”