

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

### **Mississippi State vs. Texas A&M - Corpus Christi - November 7, 2022**

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

##### ***Q: How are you feeling after your first game?***

**CJ:** "One of my first real mentors told me a long time ago, 'You have to start somewhere.' So, I guess this is our starting point. Fortunately, for us, there's a big ceiling left. We didn't get off to a very good start. I didn't help them very much. I should have known better, but I wanted to be pleasantly surprised ... They were a little nervous, they were overexcited. They were gassed the first two or three minutes in the game. At that point, I was wondering if we were out of shape. I know we're not. They were probably a little jittery, even though we had some veterans. It had been a while—new coach, new system, et cetera. So, we didn't get out the gates very well. Obviously, we settled down in the second half, but I'm glad we won, and I feel good about it."

##### ***Q: What could add to this team when you have a wing like DJ [Jeffries] who was scoring the way he was in that second half?***

**CJ:** "I think it was a 7-0 run by him. He definitely, like you mentioned, showed his explosiveness and ability to score in bunches. He had a couple of tip-in opportunities there as well. I kind of wanted him to grab it with two [hands] and stick it in the square, but he tried to tip it in. It didn't work out."

"We ran that first play of the second half for him. Regardless of, if he made it or missed it, we wanted to give him an opportunity to get going, and he knocked it down. Kind of thought this would go on a mini run, even from the three because he's been knocking it down in practice, especially recently. For whatever reason, he couldn't continue it."

##### ***Q: What was your message to the team going into halftime?***

**CJ:** "Play better, share the ball, move the ball, quit holding the ball and let's score off our defense. You know, let's rely on that. Let's rely on our offensive rebounding. Obviously, this is no slight to them [Texas A&M-Corpus Christi] and Coach [Steve] Lutz. Some of their staff members are friends of ours—we have bigger and stronger athletes across the board. So, we had to get that into the game."

"We had to get more aggressive on the backboards. We had to run the court better, and we had to harass them a little bit more. I thought we turned them over at a good rate the whole game, especially in the second half. We left some points on the board because we couldn't convert. We couldn't grab a loose ball with both hands and throw it ahead—we're trying to throw it before we have it in our hands. That stuff, obviously we can work on, and get better from. Definitely, what we talked about at halftime was what I just said on the offensive end, and the defensive end we just had to score off our defense."

##### ***Q: How good is it to have a guy like Cameron Matthews on the defensive end?***

**CJ:** "Yeah, he played athletic. He got his athleticism into the game. He didn't do that in the first half. I know he got the two fouls, and that's been something that we've been working with him is trying to find that middle-ground with his aggression. You have to be smart with your aggression. You can't try and make a play every single time and put yourself in harm's way getting into early foul trouble. I kept telling him he was going to learn the hard way, and he did. He got the two fouls and had to sit on the bench. But the second half, like you said, he was everywhere: blocking shots, getting steals and just influencing the game."

***Q: "You talked about in the offseason about how important it was to get Tolu back and you got a double- double from him in game one, what did you think of to actually see him in a game?"***

**CJ:** "It was awesome, he's a luxury. Obviously, he out-manned the guys that were trying to guard him, but it's not his fault he has to play against whoever is out there in the different colored jersey. It's nice to know you have someone who can throw it down there, most nights. If they single coverage him, he's going to have a good chance to get a good look at the basket and get the ball near the basket and get fouled. Or if not, they choose to double him in some form or fashion. He's a willing passer. So, we definitely have an inside out mentality. We're certainly going to continue to do that with Tolu."

***Q: Does energy trigger a team playing better?***

**CJ:** "I believe it does. That's something that we preach every day. We're going to have nights where we turn the ball over too much – 16 is too many. We didn't shoot the ball well from three tonight. We didn't shoot the ball very well from the free throw line tonight, and I'm sure there's a bunch of people out there that are nervous about that. I understand that, but I'm there every day. We're shooting the ball at a good clip in practice. There's a lot of basketball to be played, but that's why we rely on. We rely on our defense, our rebounding and our energy, because there will be nights when it will struggle. Everyone in the country will. When we do that, we have to rely on our defense to get us through the rough patches. That's what you're talking about. That's what I thought we did, especially in the second half."

**Guard Shakeel Moore**

***Q: I guess this question is for both of you guys, what changed in the second half? I may be off base here, but you guys' kind of looked a little tight. Were there some nerves there in the first half?***

**SM:** "It was more of just tightening up ourselves. We came out kind of sluggish to begin with. We just felt like we needed to bring the intensity out the gate and be the first to punch them in the mouth."

***Q: How different did this feel playing under Coach Jans now that you have the first game under your belts?***

**SM:** "[I'm] excited, excited for what's to come, and for what we're building here."

***Q: Shakeel, you didn't have the best game shooting the basketball, but you still made a good impact. How big is that for you to find other ways to impact the game while the jump shots are not falling?***

**SM:** "It's important, because Coach [Jans] emphasizes defense. That's what is going to get you on the floor. I do that really well. So, when my shot's not falling, defense is something I can really sit back on and lock in to."

**Forward Tolu Smith**

***Q: I guess this question is for both of you guys, what changed in the second half? I may be off base here, but you guys' kind of looked a little tight. Were there some nerves there in the first half?***

**TS:** "I would say it was just first game jitters, just a little nervousness. We've got to get all of that stuff out, and we brought it in the second half. So, I was happy we did that."

***Q: How different did this feel playing under Coach Jans now that you have the first game under your belts?***

**TS:** "Just going off what Shakeel said, I'm very excited. we got a win. We won by 19, and we didn't even play that well. So, I feel like our ceiling's high. Like Coach Jans said, we've got a high ceiling. We've just got to tighten some things up."

**Texas A&M - Corpus Christi Head Coach Steve Lutz**

***OPENING STATEMENT***

**SL:** "You know, it was a tale of two halves. The first half, we competed at a high level. We did some good things offensively and defensively. We rebounded the ball really well. In the second half, they wore on us a little bit. The physicality, the length and the girth wore on us. We didn't rebound the ball nearly as much. We didn't get any shots that I think we normally are going to make. Those shots normally did not go down. "

***Q: "Do you think it was just a little bit of shots not going down in the second half or was it more of a shot selection issue?"***

**SL:** "It was a combination of both. I thought we had some good open looks. We just missed them. Again, that is a testament to their defense – their overall athleticism and their length. We obviously don't see that every day in practice. Ours is not constructed like that. So, when you get into a game, it starts needing adjustment."

***Q: "What are you most encouraged about by this performance?"***

**SL:** "I'm encouraged by the first half. At the end of the day, we went on the road against an SEC school. We gave them a good first half. We did not compete at the level we needed to in the second half, but there's flashes of really good things from this basketball team. I definitely think we are going to get better and better."