

## **2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**

### **Mississippi State vs. Murray State– December 19, 2023**

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

***Q: Could you take us through what you were looking for in that huddle on the play to Cameron Matthews, and how that play worked out for you guys?***

**CJ:** “If it didn’t work out, there’d be hundreds of people questioning me of why we ran a lob play down one. I didn’t think about that when we were going through the process of making a decision on what we needed to run at that point. Certainly, at that point in the game, a lot of people have a lot of suggestions, and I’m glad they do.”

“[Associate Coach] James Miller suggested we run that play, and I gravitated toward it right away. It’s a play we run a ton. Not just here but previous stops. It’s always been in our library, if you will. I don’t think I’ve ever ran it when we’re down one with under a minute to play. I’ve run it in tough situations before, but never quite like that. One of the reasons it made sense is that we ran a set a little bit earlier, a possession or two where Josh [Hubbard] made the three. It was basically in that same family, if you will. It was set up nicely. Fortunately, they executed it well. We were able to get the lead, but unfortunately, at the time, it was kind of frantic. I was hoping they wouldn’t celebrate too long and get back and defend.”

***Q: Shakeel [Moore] had his second game in a row in the starting lineup, and two of his better offensive outings on the season so far. Talk about that aspect he brings to that starting five.***

**CJ:** “Yeah, I don’t know if that has anything to do with it or not. You’d have to ask him. I know it’s a big shot in the arm for us when he can make some baskets for us. He’s usually one of our better defenders. What he’s done better this year than last year is he’s found ways to cut behind the defense and get himself momentum toward the goal. And then, he’s an excellent finisher for his size, and he’s a great athlete. He’s really, really got a craft around the goal to put it in. He’s been doing it the last couple games.”

“Then, he started the game with a three against Tulane. He was 2-2 tonight [on three-pointers]. That’s got to really make him feel good going forward. It’s nice to have another option that can shoot the basketball from beyond the arc.”

***Q: How would you assess your defense in the second half?***

**CJ:** “Yeah, obviously defensively, it wasn’t one of our better performances we’ve had. Certainly, the tape will tell the true tale, but they made some tough shots too. You’ve got to give them credit. I thought the last five to seven minutes, number 2 [Rob] Perry, he made some really good shots.”

“We certainly had some breakdowns. We were going back and forth if we switched the ball screens with him, because he’s very unique. He plays the four for them. So, you’ve got a 4-5 ball screens, and you don’t see that often. Jimmy [Bell Jr.] is a bigger dude. As this game drug on, he wasn’t up to the level that we needed to be up, but I thought they made some tough shots. Like I said earlier, I thought they did a really good job of coming up with some things that could hurt us. Now that we’re exposed that way, we’re going to have to tweak what we do because other teams will mimic it.”

***Q: With how the game ended, how big was that 8-3 spurt to start the second half to give you that cushion where, when it got close to the end, it could have been worse?***

**CJ:** “Yeah, again, great start to both halves. Kudos to the starters in this particular game for being ready and motored up. What I told them after the game [in the locker room] first and foremost was, ‘Congratulations, we won the game.’ That’s what the bottom line is, that’s the way it is.”

"In two days or even in a week, for sure, nobody's going to be talking about the Murray State game and what the score was, etcetera. It's just going to be a 'W' or an 'L'. That's just the bottom line like I talked about previously in here. The problem was, I just didn't feel like, especially in the second half which I already eluded to, that we just didn't have as many guys ready to go for whatever reason. We just didn't get the same kind of production. I'm not talking about the stat sheet. Just playing what we need them to do, playing the right way and sticking with our principles. It really, really hurt us in this particular game."

***Q: Overall this year, how important has it been compared to last year to have a guy like Josh [Hubbard] that's giving you a consistent threat from deep?***

**CJ:** "Yeah, especially on the offensive end, it just changes how we look. It gives us a big weapon on the perimeter that, just to be honest with you, we didn't have last year. So, it opens up the floor for other people to drive the ball in there. It opens up the floor for the guys around the basket."

"You can tell now that the video's out, the word's out, etcetera, that they're not coming off of him very often. They're sticking with him which creates more space. He hit some big shots tonight again. He's been doing that for us all year long. He's still got room to grow. He's still trying to figure out how to play without the ball in his hands on offense. And, then certainly, on defense with the expectation that we have on that end of the floor."

**Guard Shakeel Moore and Forward Cameron Matthews**

***Q: What was different from the Southern game at the end, and what allowed the team to hold off Murray State?***

**SM:** "I just feel like it was execution. Coach [Jans] drew up some good plays down the stretch. We just were able to strap down on defense to keep them [Murray State] from trading baskets."

***Q: Were you looking for the dunk towards the end?***

**CM:** "Yes, that's the play [Coach] Jans drew up. We had a counter if they [Murray State] would've stayed off of me and played the lob. Thank God they didn't, and the play happened. So, everything worked out in our favor."

***Q: Shak, you've returned to the starting lineup the last two games. Where do you feel most effective in the game?***

**SM:** "I feel like I'm an all-around guy. I play defense, which is my strength. I've learned to come out there with confidence and be able to hit shots as well."

***Q: Did you take your foot off the gas after going up by 19 in the second half and allowed them to get back into the game?***

**CM:** "I just think we might have dropped off a little. The guys that subbed in might have relaxed a little bit, maybe. We just have to get in film, correct those mistakes and get back to it."

***Q: What allowed you all to start the game strong on offense?***

**SM:** "Just working at it at practice. Coach stresses to go game speed at practice to simulate game time. Just getting in the gym [helped as well]. We've got a lot of guys that are in there every day getting extra shots before and after practice. It's a good thing for us."

***Q: What was the message and the mentality during the timeout late in the second half?***

**SM:** "Just that we're playing to win. Everybody got on their heels a little. As Cam mentioned, we had a little bit of a drop off. So, we're just playing to win and not trying to play to lose."

**Q: *How have you got yourself antiquated after missing some time early on?***

**SM:** "Chopping wood. Everyday just getting to the grind. Working in the gym, watching film, a lot of sessions just to get me caught back up and stuff like that. It has been easy [getting back]. My teammates have been talking to me and feeding me."

**Q: *How has D.J. Jeffries impacted the team's success this season?***

**CM:** "Just him being himself. D.J. has always been that guy. Whether, it's scoring the ball or not. He's a really great player. He knows how to play. Everything he does doesn't always equate to the box score. He's just a winner, that's how I like to see my brother."

**Q: *How frustrating is it having close back-to-back home games with how much of a veteran team this is?***

**CM:** "It's been real frustrating. Just knowing the guys that have been before, we've weathered storms before. We've got to do better job of containing the other team and not letting them get confidence once we punch them in the mouth."

**Murray State Head Coach Steve Prohm**

**Q: *Coach, I said we can knit pick possessions here. We were down 19 [points] with 17 minutes left. Can you talk about the outstanding effort from your guys to have an opportunity win the game in the final moments?***

**SP:** "Real disappointed with the outcome. I thought we played the last 12 minutes, I have to see exactly if it's 12 or 15 minutes. We finally started competing better on the defensive end of the floor. You talked about a top 10 defense in the country, I thought we executed. I thought our guys did a good job early ... We just couldn't get any stops early. But, like I said, the last 12 minutes we really bowed up and defended and competed."

"We put ourselves in position. We were up two. I can't remember every play now, but I think we fouled them. Then, they made a dunk to take the lead and made free throws at the end. The only possession that I'm disappointed in the end, we kind of settled for a deep three right there [down one]. We ran the same action before, and we got a wide open three to put us up. If you're going to play a team like this, you got to know how to attack them. You got to get the ball skipped. You got to get the ball over the defense to the opposite side, play off close outs. The last one, I just have to look at the tape to see. We're running that good action, and we got that corner three."

**Q: *Coach, I thought offensively against this Mississippi State defense, it's very physical. They work to keep you from being able to reversing the ball. What did you think of the ball reversal passing that you were talking, and why was that so effective?***

**SP:** "One thing, you can't do is be stagnant. I thought our guys did a really good job of the ball finding who we like. The way they play gives you the opportunity to really move it, but I thought the ball had really good energy tonight. We shot 50 percent from three, you know we missed some good ones too. We got to continue grow on the defense end. Our league is so good defensively, we got to continue to work on that. Defensively, we got to continue to compete. I haven't even seen the rebounds yet. They're tough, and they're physical. We got into some foul trouble a little bit."

**Q: *How were you able to slow down their offense after they had a good first half and a quick start to the second half?***

**SP:** “We played harder. We have to make them miss. They were shooting wide open shots. Their defense is a little bit different than ours. They’re going to pressure you into moving the ball to make plays. This is a playmaking game. When we watch the tape, we’re going to be sick because we made a lot of mistakes. When we switch ball screens, you shouldn’t pinch in.”

“Again, the last 12 minutes to our guys credit, they really competed and got some 50-50 balls. They’re a defensive team. What a play by Brian Moore Jr on the back cut. We’ve got to continue ways to share the ball, how we can be mentally, physically and emotionally tougher on the defensive end. We’ve had tough records to start. That’s a part of the non-conference. Sometimes, you’ve got the storybook years too. Sometimes, it’s like this. You get your way out of it by working your tail off. You go to work every day.”

“You walk into the arena Saturday for the next game ready to go. You go from there. We’ve been down this road before. It’s not fun when you’re going through it. It sure is rewarding on the other side.”