

## **2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. North Texas – December 17, 2023**

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

#### ***Q: What adjustments were made after the first 15 minutes of the game?***

**CJ:** "I don't know if something changed. I thought we were really engaged defensively to start the game. They made some really tough shots. A couple balls bounced their way, but I wasn't disappointed in the huddles at all. One time I looked up and the score was 5-1. It felt like we were leading the game with our effort and the way we were executing. We missed some shots at the rim that we needed to go in, but the huddles were good. The guys were good. They remained focused, and they stayed the course defensively. As the game unfolded, our athleticism, our speed and our size got into the game."

#### ***Q: How important was it to have so few turnovers?***

**CJ:** "It means even more because of the respect that we have as a staff for Coach Hodge, their coaches, their players and their [the North Texas] program. They're one of the leading teams in the country at turning people over. We're not very good at it [not turning over the ball], and we haven't been very good at it all year long. It's something that we've talked a lot about the last few days and even before that. You could see that our guys were tougher and stingier with the ball. They did a good job of making good decisions and taking care of it."

"I don't remember ever having a team have that few turnovers in a game. My teams usually aren't built quite like that. We tend to turn it over more than most teams to be honest with you. I can't remember, and I'm not going to take the time to look. I have this sheet for metrics. I said after the game '5.4? You've got to be missing a decimal or something, that was our turnover percentage.' I've never seen that. It was really good. Hopefully, that's something we can keep getting better at."

#### ***Q: How does KeShawn Murphy impact the game with his skill set?***

**CJ:** "It's up to Murph. I love him, but he knows where his deficiencies are. He's got to get better on the defensive end. He's got to get tougher on the defensive end. He's got to rebound harder if you will and be assignment correct all the time. The offensive part is easy for him. He's very skilled, and he's very talented."

"When he's motored up, he can get to the point where he can defend like we want him to. He provides a whole different look for us. You can play small ball five with him where he can stretch the court. We've been playing small ball five with Cameron [Matthews], but he [Matthews] obviously doesn't shoot the ball from three at a higher rate. So, it's a different look for us. He [Murphy] can certainly play more his natural position at the four. That gives us more length on the floor at all times. So, it was nice to see him. He should've had more. He missed a couple bunnies that normally he doesn't. He had a nice offensive game tonight."

#### ***Q: It's been 10 years since this program has played a game in Tupelo. What's the significance of playing here and in different parts of the state?***

**CJ:** "I thought it was awesome. I've never been here until yesterday. I came in last night obviously. Then, shootaround today. I didn't know what to expect. I thought the arena was great. The setup was great. The folks that made this possible. I didn't know anything about any glitches or anything like that, but it seemed very smooth and well-run. The crowd was bigger than I expected. I didn't know what to expect, but it was way bigger than I expected. It was cool. I saw a lot of Maroon in the stands."

"I thought Coach Hodge did an excellent job with the timing of his timeouts. A couple times I thought, 'Here they [the fans] come. Then, boom, he did a good job of timing those timeouts to kind of keep the crowd at bay a couple different times."

***Q: Mook [Cameron Matthews] stuffed the stat sheet today. 9 points, 12 boards, 7 assists, 5 blocks and 3 steals. Can you talk about his importance on this team and how important it is to have that glue guy?***

**CJ:** "When stuff like that happens, it's like guys that run sprints in practice. All of a sudden, they're running, running, running. Then, they'll run one at 3-to-4 seconds less than they do. I'm like, 'The cat's out of the bag, man. What are you doing? You have it in there, let's use it all the time.' Mook's the same way."

"There's no reason he's not capable of playing with that kind of energy every single night. It's all over the floor. He flirted with a triple-double. He could've even maybe got one of those tonight, but he was different today. His motor was revved. He had a chip on his shoulder, and I think that led us to play a little harder because people tend to follow his lead. He's just got to understand that's his responsibility on this team. He's got to do it every single day."

***Q: Going off of the injuries and the guys gelling, how has what you wanted to do with this team in the past couple of weeks evolved as the team has gotten healthier and are working more off of each other?***

**CJ:** "We talk a lot about playing with and for each other. That's been a rallying cry at times, recently. Every single night, you're not going to play your best on offense. But play with the guys on the court and for each other at all times. You can see it starting to get better that way. We're still a long ways away from where we want to be, but I thought our practices were even better leading up to this game. It was nice to see him get it on the floor."

***Q: What have you seen from D.J. Jeffries the past few games?***

**CJ:** "He's playing how we envisioned him playing. He's in a great space right now. He's just getting deeper in the paint, and he's just driving it in there. If he can't get it all the way to the rim, he's gotten one more dribble to get closer and draw everybody in. Now, he's figured out how to play off two feet and he's finding people. Sometimes, he drives in there and pivots and finds someone late. He works on that all the time."

"What I loved most about him today is he had five offensive rebounds. He's a great defensive rebounder and consistent defensive rebounder. He isn't a consistent offensive rebounder. I don't have the stat sheets, but I know this year he doesn't have that many offensive rebounds. Now, he's being more physical on the backboards. He's getting his athletic body downhill and kind of joining 'the offensive rebounding club' if you will."

**Forwards KeShawn Murphy and D.J. Jeffries**

***Q: What was your mentality and the approach on the role you were going to have today?***

**KM:** "Obviously, we struggled on the offensive end, and I have the skill set to be able to help the team. So, any open looks I had, I took the shot. We had the advantage."

***Q: What have the past couple weeks been like for you on the road getting back and getting your legs back under you?***

**KM:** "Work, really. The help from my teammates getting back and the help from the staff. Just working every day and being an everyday guy – coming in with same attitude, a good attitude. Everything will figure itself out."

***Q: What changed with you guys from the start of the game to the last five minutes of the first half and going into the second half?***

**DJJ:** “We just kept playing defense. When we started to score a little more, Coach Jans told us all week to play hard. So, that’s what we did. We just played harder than them. We wanted to out toughened and we came out with a win. That’s what we did.”

***Q: Talk about the balance of the scoring tonight.***

**DJJ:** “It can be anybody’s night. We’ve got so many talented guys. Murph [KeShawn Murphy] showed up clutch tonight, Hubb [Josh Hubbard] came in and did what he does. You never know who’s turn it’s going to be. It can be anyone’s night, it’s good to have talent like that. So, you never know who’s night it is.”

***Q: Did you guys ever get nervous when you were down double digits early in the first half?***

**DJJ:** “No, we don’t really ever get nervous. We know our program is built on toughness. Sometimes, we’re going to come out flat. We just need to keep fighting and keep believing. We’re together. So, we’re going to keep building and fighting. So, that’s what we did. We just told each other to keep fighting and keep chopping down the lead.”

***Q: What were your coaches and teammates saying to you when you were helping key that comeback early on?***

**KM:** “It was really the defensive part. They know that I’ve got the offensive part so really the defense. They kept encouraging me on defense, and everything else will figure itself out.”

***Q: When did you know you had it going tonight?***

**KM:** “When I made my first shot. When I saw the ball go into the net.”

***Q: How have you found yourself becoming more a leader over the years?***

**DJJ:** “It’s really me just expressing how I feel. Going through what I’ve been through, that’s me just expressing how I feel and what I feel I can become.”

***Q: What have you learned about this team coming during this three-game winning streak?***

**DJJ:** “We’ve been gelling together. There’s a lot of ups and downs in college basketball. So, you can never get too high, and you can never get too low. The main thing is we were just trying to finish the game. With Murray State, we let them come back a little bit. We had a little lead, and Coach [Jans] told us in the huddle, not again. So, we didn’t let them do it again. So, really we are just learning and growing each and every game.”

***Q: What helped you get through your injuries to help you get to moments like this?***

**KM:** “I want to thank the guys that stayed here, the guys I’ve been with for three years. They’re really the ones who are encouraging me and seeing my growth as a player. And [Coach] Jans, believing in me as a player to be able to come and still help. So, really, just a bought-in program to help me keep moving forward and motivate me every day.”