

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

### **Mississippi State at No. 24 Alabama – February 3, 2024**

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

***Q: You guys have struggled on the road and turnovers have been a big part of that. How big do you think that was early establishing Alabama's momentum?***

**CJ:** "Yeah, I said it earlier in the season, it definitely had become an Achilles' Heel for us. We had a couple games where we kept the number satisfactory, but unfortunately when things start going off the rails that's usually an area that we can point to that's given us problems. This league is so athletic and dynamic that when you turn that thing over, more often than not, when it's a live ball turnover, it turns into conversions and especially when you're on the road. It changes the tenure of the game. The crowds get into it, and your confidence lowers a bit. We certainly had a lot of problems tonight, but that was one of them."

***Q: The schedule opens up a bit after a week with two tough road games. What do you feel like would be most important for the guys in order to respond from this game to keep the season on the right track?***

**CJ:** "I just told the team that I felt really good about coming into this game. I really did about our plan, how we were playing and we were real confident that way. I told them that everything I had said to them coming into this game was all true to us, and how it felt internally. Certainly, I wasn't trying to trick them or make them feel better than they should."

"I just remember it was 23-17. We were down, and I remember telling one of the staff guys that I like how this game is being played. Then, we missed some bunnies. Then, we turned it over. We had a better chance to have a better deficit at that point, but we didn't. Then, all of a sudden, it just changed quickly. They went on one of their patented runs, and we find ourselves obviously in a big hole."

"In terms of how we go forward, we've got veteran guys. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your perspective, we've been in this situation already in our short tenure here at Mississippi State. Last year, at the turn, we were 2-7. We found a way to stay together, and we continued to practice and fight. We ended up turning the tide a little bit and making the NCAA tournament. Will that happen again, who knows? But I'm pretty confident that I've got a group of men in there at understand that will understand that we've got to move on. We've got to process this and evaluate on Monday when we get together. We've got to start thinking about how we're going to get a win in this league, and we'll be at home."

***Q: You guys went to Tolu [Smith III] early and got their bigs in foul trouble. How was Alabama able to counter that, and what did you see as far as area of improvement that gave your team problems tonight?***

**CJ:** "Yeah, it was pretty obvious their plan was to play Tolu one-on-one and just throw a bunch of different bodies at him of different sizes and shape. Not really worry if that got them into foul trouble. Just play one on one and try to get him to beat them that way and not give him the opportunity to kick to cutters and kick to open three guys."

"They really gave [Josh] Hubbard a ton of attention when he had the ball with trapping him on rhw ball screens and trying to take away our two leading scorers. Obviously, it was a good plan, and it worked very well for them."

“They’re still the same team that I thought. They play their system, and they’re committed to it. They shot 48 three’s. I’m sure if they had it their way they’d shoot 50 or 60 on any given night. When you shoot those long shots, it sets up opportunities to get long rebounds that are hard to rebound from three like that over the course of the night. You’ve got to give them a lot of credit. They played awfully well, and obviously deserved to win the game.”

***Q: After a few subpar offensive games for Tolu, how good of a sign is that going forward to see him score over 20 points again?***

**CJ:** “I mean, when people choose to play him single coverage, that’s what he has to do. We don’t coach their team, and everyone has a different plan. Sometimes, they’re nights where they’re adamant that he’s not going to get as many attempts around the basket with different double teams, etcetera. Tonight, they chose that, and he responded pretty well.”

“Certainly, he would’ve played more minutes if the score would’ve been closer. At that point, I just felt like it was best for him to stay over there and get ready for the next one. But he certainly made some baskets and got to the line. Obviously, he needs to convert a little bit better at the line, but he did what he expected him to do when he receives that kind of coverage.”

**Forward Tolu Smith III and Guard Shawn Jones Jr.**

***Q: How detrimental was it for the team to allow 20 offensive rebounds to Alabama?***

**TS III:** “That was everything. I mean 20 offensive rebounds, it’s hard to win any game like that. From start to finish, they just gave us an old-fashioned whooping.”

***Q: Tolu, was that the game plan to get you ball early, and how did Alabama get you out of it?***

**TS III:** “I don’t think that was the game plan. Every night, it’s something different, but I think the game plan was to slow the pace down. Alabama plays a fast-paced game. They’ve got the number one offensive rating in the nation. Credit to Nate Oats, and their coaching staff. They did a great job of playing the way they played, and they just got over on us.”

***Q: What is the message in the locker room with two losses on the road this week?***

**SJJ:** “Just stay together basically. Keep digging, and we will become the team that we need to become to get the job done.”

***Q: How do you think Grant Nelson and Jarin Stevenson have adjusted or maybe gotten more physical since you played them last?***

**TS III:** “No, I wouldn’t say physical. I think Jarin [Stevenson] did a great job tonight. He made a lot of tough shots for them, got on the glass and did a lot of good things for them. We had their bigs in foul trouble. So, I think we did a great job. They’re just converting on the offensive glass. Like I said, we aren’t going to win a lot of games like that.”