

2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State at No. 8 Kentucky – January 17, 2024

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: Talk about the message to the team at halftime and the spark you guys had to start the second half.

CJ: "It was fairly intense. We were obviously disappointed with the results of the first half. Just surprised at our lack of urgency, if you will. We've got some veteran guys that have been there, done that. We thought we could lean on them a little bit going into this type of environment, and we just didn't, you know? We were on our heels and on our toes. We let them dictate everything and just got behind. We couldn't wait to get to halftime."

Q: That's three straight games where you guys have allowed 70+ points. Can you pinpoint something that's slacked off a bit on defense the past few games?

CJ: "Well, we're playing better teams. That's certainly a part of it. We've had some great opponents already in the early part of the SEC season. That's what happens, more often than not. You play the non-league. Then, you play in this league, and you get exposed a little bit. We'll get back to work and figure out how we can get better on that end of the floor."

Q: This Kentucky team was 75 percent on two's tonight after coming into this game as one of the best three-point shooting teams in the country. What makes them so difficult to stop from watching them on film?

CJ: "I'm sure I sound like a broken record with the other coaches talking about them, but there's so many facilitators and playmakers. You've got two guys that come off the bench [Rob Dillingham and Reed Shepard] that could start on a lot of college basketball teams across the country at any level."

"They have the luxury to have four guys at the guard position that are interchangeable and are all a little bit different. They're all their own basketball players in their own right. Then, to see them like each other and share the ball – they've got other players as well. They spread you out. They spread you out because they can shoot it so well from three. They've got guys that can get downhill, and they've got lob threats that are behind the defense. They put a lot of pressure on you defensively."

Q: How concerning is it being on your heels with a team that has so many veteran guys especially in the first half like you mentioned?

CJ: "I'm not. It's just one game on the road. You've seen us enough, and it's not always a situation. For whatever reason, it was tonight. I was surprised, disappointed and hope it won't continue to happen."

Q: Coming into tonight Kentucky was struggling a little guarding the pick-and-roll. What did you see from that on tape, and what adjustments did they make that gave them more success tonight.

CJ: "Yeah, I'll have to watch the tape in order to talk about any adjustments that they made in that particular part of the game. But the pick-and-roll is such a big part of basketball now, and everybody's doing it. We certainly tried to get into that as well. We had some good plays and some bad plays."

Q: With Josh Hubbard tonight, did you feel there was a case for his shots not falling tonight for him or was there something else that caused his struggles on the offensive end?

CJ: "I'm not in their team room so I don't know what their plan was. But, from where I stood, I thought they were very attentive to Josh, and rightfully so. I'm sure he was pretty high up on the scouting report."

"It seemed like when he got the ball, they were trying to take away his space. When there was any sort of ball screen, they were staying as long as they needed to make sure he wasn't getting a shot off. They just did a good job on him. They did a good job on him. For whatever reason, he could never get it going. He's had some great games for us. He's been leaned on to score. When he doesn't have a great night, we're not as good of a basketball team."

Q: You had the big win against Tennessee a week ago and are now out of this four-game gauntlet to start SEC play. As the schedule opens up a little, how do you flush these last few games out of the way and get back on track for Vanderbilt?

CJ: "That's just the way it is. You have to, you don't have a choice. You go and focus on it for too long, it becomes a problem. We're all going to certainly sit in it for a while. But, on the way home, we're going to start working on the next opponent which is Vanderbilt on Saturday."

"This is my second go-around in the league, and it's unforgiving. You can't dwell too long. You've got to learn to grow, flush it like you said and move on."

Guard Trey Fort

Q: What do you think caused the slow start and the struggles during the first half?

TF: "It was tough. We didn't come out with the energy we thought we would. We didn't get off to the right start. In the second half, we kind of jumped out, had more energy and tried to set the tone a little better. But, we couldn't put all the minutes in together at one time."

Q: What was the message at halftime given that you said it felt like the second half was the best effort wise you guys showed all night?

TF: "As a team, even the coaches, we were all at each other about the energy that we came out with. We weren't happy with it at all. We knew if we wanted just a chance to win the game, we had to come out and go harder than what we did."

Q: How disappointing is it that when a week ago the team had a big upset against Tennessee and then you dropped these past two games where the defense and energy weren't at their highest?

TF: "It doesn't feel good at all. Knowing what we're capable of and knowing what we've got together on our team – it doesn't feel good especially after, like you said, that big win against Tennessee. We felt like that would be our key start to a great year. But we're going to get back, and we're going to turn it around for sure."

Q: Going off that, how do you guys flush these last two games and getting back on track this week against Vanderbilt?

TF: "It's all about how you respond. Just having the right mindset as a team, not individually. We've got to be together. We all have to have the right hand on what we do best, go ahead and do the best we can."

Q: You personally started this season starting against Arizona State then had some games where you weren't getting a lot of minutes at times. How have you handled that throughout the year and kept your confidence up?

TF: "I give my thanks to God. Mentally, just staying with it, and staying confident. Confidence has always been my thing since I was younger. I will never let that go anywhere and just being ready when my name is called. I'm always ready for the opportunity. This is the game I love. So, I'm going to give it everything I've got at all times."