

2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Quotes

Mississippi State at Florida – January 24, 2024

Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: How big were those last few minutes of the first half and the first few minutes in the second half where Florida was able to capture momentum?

CJ: “Yeah, we were battling foul trouble in the first half. I had D.J. [Jeffries] and Cameron [Matthews] both with two. We were playing them because it was so early, and we had to. Shawn Jones had two as well. We got to about the three-minute mark. At that point, I’m like, ‘Can we even get to halftime and not get a third [foul] of those guys?’ That probably hurt us a little bit the last few possessions of the game in terms of having a bigger deficit than we would’ve liked. Then, for whatever reason, we just didn’t start off very well in the second half. All of a sudden, it was a 15, 16, 17-point game, and we were playing from behind for the rest of the evening.”

Q: When you don’t have a third big man off the bench, how tough is it to play against a team like this with the size that they have?

CJ: “Yeah, playing Tolu [Smith III] and Jimmy [Bell Jr.] together wasn’t by default. We wanted them to play together because of the matchups that were presented with how Florida plays ... We felt like we could put those guys on the floor together. The results were a mixed bag. D.J. [Jeffries] is our backup four when Cameron [Matthews] is the four. So, when they’re both saddled with foul trouble, it makes for some interesting times on how to figure out how to handle it.”

Q: Tolu got going a little bit in the second half, but it seemed like the veteran guys were struggling to get going offensively. Playing on the road in the future, how big is it to get them your veteran starting guys going early and have those veterans step up a bit?

CJ: “Yeah, first of all, Shakeel Moore needs to be commended for playing. He was very sick, and he didn’t attend practice leading into the game. He didn’t even attend shootaround today. He decided to try to warm up and gave us the thumbs up. He didn’t play great in the first half, but he gave us solid minutes [in the second half]. He was on fumes in the locker room after the game. But we definitely need some guys that have been there, done that, to play better. You mentioned some guys that need to do that. It’s hard to win on the road, and we just have to play better.”

Q: Did you feel that your guys ran out of gas there after you got it down to six with a chance to get even closer? How much energy was expelled pressing and trapping?

CJ: “Sure, no question, that’s part of it. You get in a situation like that, and you play desperate. You play with urgency, and the other team tends to get on their heels a little bit. You think you’re good. Then, you start making a run at them. You can feel the vibe changing a little bit.”

“Like you said, we got back within striking distance, but we never got back to the point where it was like, ‘Oh boy, this is going to come down to the last possession.’ If we would have gotten it to four or three when it was at six, I thought maybe that could have been really interesting at that point. But certainly, like you said when you have to do all that, then press every single possession, have a lot more traps and then fly around, certainly it takes a lot out of you.”

Q: Florida has a lot of guards, Will Richard had 18 points in the first half. What made them a tough cover for you guys?

CJ: “Yeah, I don’t know his pregame rituals. I don’t know him very well, but he played awfully well and really had it going. Not just the offensive output, but the rebounding.”

"To miss a double-double from the three-spot by one rebound is very impressive. He made some tough shots that were contested at times and made some shots that we didn't do a very good job on. But he was a big difference maker tonight, for sure."

Q: Josh Hubbard was keeping you guys in it in the first half. What did you think of the way he came out as a freshman playing on the road in the SEC?

CJ: "Yeah, we don't look at him like a freshman anymore. We rely on him at this point. He had 26 [points], but he had to take a lot of shots to get there. We were in a position where him taking a contested three is maybe our best option at times. It's no fault of his where he was put in a position where we were trying to get him to get shots and try to give us a chance to get back in the game. But Josh doesn't get fazed by too much, and hopefully he'll continue to play well for us."

Guard Josh Hubbard

Q: In the South Carolina game, the Gamecocks went on a run to end the first half and gain momentum. The same thing happened tonight against Florida. How big are those swings before halftime?

JH: "Yeah, it's huge. We've been in that situation before being down at halftime. Like you said, when there's momentum going against our team, we've just got to stay positive in the locker room. For the most part, we were. We just have to adjust, and we just have to play harder. They played harder than we did."

Q: You scored 26 points. What do you feel like needs to be done in the guard group to have the other guys complement more?

JH: "I think we all just have to play with more confidence. Sometimes, we get in our own thoughts. I'm a victim of that too, I can't say much there. We're all good guards, and I think we're one of the best guard groups in the country. I think once we get that confidence up, we'll be really good."

Q: What's it like playing in these SEC road environments, and what do you feel like is the next step to getting those road wins?

JH: "It's a Super Bowl [every game]. Coming in as an underdog and as the away team, it's tough. Road wins are the best. I haven't experienced it yet, but Coach [Jans] says it's one of the best things to ever accomplish because you put so much work in. To do it to another team at their place is just more rewarding."

Q: February is nearing and opportunities for signature wins are starting to shrink. How do you guys stop from panicking and worrying about opportunities that might be slipping away?

JH: "We know there's a lot more opportunities down the road. We just have to learn lessons like this. We can't pass them up. Each one matters, and we can't look past a team. The SEC is a tough league. Anybody can beat anybody."

Q: What was Florida doing offensively that made it tough for you guys in the first half?

JH: "Yeah, we did great defensively those first few minutes ... I felt like we just stopped boxing out. I think that's when their big run. They started making three's, and they had one dunk in transition. That was a momentum changer. Then, they got up, and we had to fight our way back. We let them get the best of us."