

2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State at Ole Miss – January 30, 2024

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: It seemed like Tolu [Smith III] struggled to get going early on. What were they doing defensively to slow him down?

CJ: “Yeah, they were rotating different guys on him and changing up their coverage in terms of their double teams – when they went and who they went off of. He did some nice things against it. He created some shots and created some closeouts, but there were times where he wasn’t as patient as we would like him to be in terms of the decisions he made. He ended up having four turnovers. The changing coverages, the changing people they put on him, certainly slowed him down some.”

Q: On the final play, Cam [Cameron Matthews] gets to the rim and has a chance to tie the game there. How did the play draw up, was he the first option?

CJ: “It drew up exactly how we intended. We didn’t know if they would pressure or not. It was a little token. We had some backscreens to get the ball to Hubb [Josh Hubbard], and then we’d try to flatten them out and run a little bit of a slice action.”

“Basically, I told the staff if I didn’t like how it unfolded with 12 seconds left, we could call timeout and reorganize. But as it unfolded, I was getting ready, ready, ready, but I liked how it unfolded. I thought he [Matthews] was going to stick it in the goal. I thought he had a pretty good path to the basket. Then, obviously, it didn’t work our way there with the free throws.”

Q: Rams [Dashwn Davis] has struggled lately. How encouraging was it to see him gain some of his confidence and get you guys back in the game in the second half?

CJ: “Yeah, that was the bright spot for us. People that follow us, like most of the folks in here, know that he hasn’t been playing up to his capabilities. But he stayed with it, he’s been great. He hasn’t hung his head. Now, because of that in my opinion, he’s getting some results that are better for him individually. Certainly, we need everybody hitting on the cylinders. Hopefully, this will boost his confidence going forward.”

Q: You went with a smaller three-guard lineup with Jimmy [Bell Jr.] and Tolu [Smith III] on the bench. Was that a product of Tolu being in foul trouble, or was it more of the matchups with what Ole Miss was going with?

CJ: “At the beginning, it was a byproduct of Tolu’s fourth foul. But, as the game unfolded, the plan certainly was to bring him back. But, with us being down a little bit and them going to some spread and a lot of ball screens, we felt like that’d give us the best chance to guard them.”

“Hindsight is 20-20, and we had couple of switches that weren’t up to snuff. Then, they shot the three anyway. Tolu certainly could’ve certainly done that as well. Certainly, would love it to be old school six-on-six girls basketball where we can play offense and defense and sub them in and out like that, but I know that’s not the way the game is played. In the end, we just felt like that was our best chance.”

“I thought offensively down the stretch with those guys being out of position that they really executed. They ran on the stuff that we drew up, and we got the shots that we wanted. We just couldn’t get quite enough stops to get it to where we wanted the game to be.”

Q: Tonight was the biggest crowd in attendance at this arena tonight. What did you think of the environment compared to come of the other rivalries you've had a chance to take part in?

CJ: "Yeah, it was great. This is what rivalries should feel like and should sound like. Like I told the team, if you're not sky high and in anticipation of playing a game like this, you're probably in the wrong locker room. That's what you work hard for."

"When you're growing up, you want to play in these types of games when they're meaningful. Guys that are new certainly got educated on what this rivalry means to both fanbases. I thought it was really, really, good. People were fine to me. I haven't asked my wife yet, but they were respectful of me. We had no issues. The crowd was great. I didn't think it affected us. I didn't think it distracted us. I thought our guys really handled the situation."

"You know, we just ended the first half poorly. We weren't in control, but we had the upper hand of the game. It just didn't end very well. Then, unfortunately, we didn't change that momentum to start the second half. All of a sudden, we find ourselves down 10, and we're playing from behind for the rest of the game. We just couldn't get over the hump."

Q: You guys were never able to regain the lead in the second half, and they got off to that fast start. What made it so difficult to get over the hump?

CJ: "Well, first of all, they're obviously a good basketball team. They're winning a lot of games for a reason. I've got a ton of respect for Coach Beard's coaching ability and his staff. They've come in here and changed the profile of this basketball program. They deserve a lot of credit. It's a big game for both of us for a lot of different reasons, but I thought they played really well and their kids played really well. It was a first-class game all the way."

"We just couldn't get over the hump. Certainly, there's a lot of plays back and forth that we'll go over on the bus ride home and see where it went wrong. If I wasn't involved in it, it would be an awesome college basketball game to view or be a part of in some other capacity. It's going to be a long bus ride home."

Q: You told us that turnovers were the biggest problem for your team. Was it more about your team making mistakes, or what Ole Miss was doing defensively?

CJ: "We had a 27.3 percent turnover ratio. It's hard to win. We average around 18 I think, which is not a great number. It's a little above the norm in college basketball, and I've talked you guys locally that it's become our Achilles' Heel. Some games, it doesn't show up, but when we have issues it usually goes back to that."

"I'm not sure, I'm trying to figure it out. We do a lot of things to try to put our guys in positions to make better decisions with the basketball. I think we've got to work on that Jekyll and Hyde. We play defense in a certain mindset, and we crash the glass with a certain mindset. Sometimes, that carries over into how we run offense at times. We're a little too aggressive. We try to make some internal passes that are not there."

"I'm proud of my guys. A lot of teams could've easily walked away from that situation with the crowd and the score. There was no give up. Our huddles were awesome. They were together. They felt like we're going to have a chance to win the game throughout the second half, and they stuck with it. They stayed with it. They figured out a way to get the balance of the game back where we had a legitimate chance to win. As a coach when you're in a hostile environment, you're proud of your guys when you do that. I just told them, 'We're a good basketball team and we're on our way to being a great basketball team.'"

"Certainly, we're hitting the turning point of SEC play and we'll see how it unfolds. But I like where our mental state is, and we'll see if we can get some wins on the other side."

Q: You talk about getting over the hump and the teams you've had to play in the SEC. Eight of the first nine are NCAA NET Quad I games. How tough has this been to navigate this first part of the schedule?

CJ: "I love it. I hope they do it to us every single year. What great opportunities, great environments and great opportunities for our kids and our program. Certainly, I don't like our record in SEC play right now. We'll continue to talk about these opportunities. If we don't take care of some of them or take advantage of some of them, they're just wasted opportunities. Then, as we get closer to the end of the season, it becomes a must-win situation. It's a heck of a schedule. The SEC is obviously unrelenting and unforgiving. We've got 11 guaranteed games left, and we've got to find some ways to win some of them."

Q: With these road games, what do you feel like the guys have learned about managing the highs and lows and the runs of being in a hostile environment like this?

CJ: "This is a bottom-line business, everyone knows that. Our kids know there's a winner and a loser. Like I said earlier, I thought we did some things tonight that we grew. I'm not sure a month ago if we come back in an environment like this on the road and give ourselves a fighting chance to be on the right side of the ledger. But again, it doesn't really matter. Nobody cares what the score is, or how close you've got. It's easy to get close, but it's hard to win. We've got to figure out a way to win next time out."

Guards Josh Hubbard and Shakeel Moore

Q: You guys had 15 turnovers that led to 18 points for them. How big was that in not taking care of the ball?

SM: "It was major, it was major. We just have to do a better job taking care of the ball, being more solid on offense and take care of each possession."

Q: When they were down by two and you guys had it late in the second half, what did you see on that possession where Cameron [Matthews] had the lane at the end of the game?

JH: "Yeah, we talked about it in the huddle before. We knew Mook [Cameron Matthews] could be strong and can get to the rim anytime he wants to. Like you said, we were down two. We thought it was a great time to run that play so we could either get a foul or a bucket."

Q: For you guys having another game on the road coming up at Alabama this weekend, what's the message to turn it around and get that first true road win?

SM: "Just to stick together, keep our heads up and weather the storm. Everybody goes through adversity. We just have to go down and handle business."

Q: You guys were struggling offensively, and they built the lead out to start the second half. Shak [Shakeel Moore] really stepped up and hit some big shots for the team down the stretch. What were you seeing from him that changed the momentum?

JH: "He helped us get our momentum right back. Without his shot making ability and getting to rim easily anytime he wants to, it's a completely different game. So, he got us back in that lead for sure."

Q: Rams [Dashawn Davis] got it going in the second half. He had been struggling the last few games. How big is it to see some shots fall for him and get him going a bit?

SM: "It was really big. Like you said, he'd been struggling. We're all behind him, we're all supporting him, and we're all still working hard in the gym. I just feel like it was a good confidence booster for him going into the next game."

Q: Josh, with everything that happened last year in your recruiting process. What was the reception like for you, and how did you react to that?

JH: "I mean, everybody knew I was going to get booed. That was pretty much expected, but I processed through the moment. I felt like I reacted pretty good. I didn't say anything back to them like that. I just kept my peace and stayed humble. So, that's about all I can do."