

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

### **Mississippi State vs. South Carolina – January 6, 2024**

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

***Q: You guys are now 0-2 in true road games. What do you feel like is not translating in these tough environments?***

**CJ:** “Oh gosh, two completely different games on why it didn’t go in our favor. I’m not sure if it’s necessarily the fact that we lost both road games that we’ve played in. The Rutgers game [at] Seton Hall was a road game other than how they define it. Just different games, same result. I don’t think there’s one thing that I could say that was an issue in both particular games.”

***Q: Mississippi State won twice against South Carolina last year. What are some things you’ve noticed that are different about South Carolina this year?***

**CJ:** “Not necessarily just today. Film prep, scout prep, obviously, they’re a better basketball team this year than they were last year. They did a really nice job in their recruiting efforts, both in retaining the kids that helped them [last year] and adding the pieces [this year] that are playing well.”

“They’ve just got more scoring options on their team. They really shoot the ball well from three when they play five guys on the court that all can shoot the three and spread you out. It poses some problems. Then, you’ve got [B.J.] Mack specifically that can score both inside and out. You’ve got to make some decisions with him. They’ve just got more talent. They’ve got a veteran group like us. But just the thing that stuck out to me most was the three-point shooting, and how well they share the ball. They’ve got a very unselfish team. They really move the ball, and they really share the ball.”

***Q: South Carolina grabbed 15 or 16 offensive rebounds. What do you think went wrong on the glass?***

**CJ:** “Yeah, that to me was why we lost the game. It’s something that the way our team’s constructed that we’ve got to be a good rebounding team in order to win. We weren’t today. That was the one thing that I talked about most after the game, and heck during a lot of the timeouts. We’ve got the information in real time where we’re at from a percentage standpoint.”

“I’m not sure. I can’t pinpoint it, but we gave up almost half on the backboards percentage wise that way it’s going to be tough for us all year long. I don’t think we’ve had a game all year long where we gave up 47 percent offensive rebounding. We thought that would be a strength of ours heading into today, and it wasn’t. That’s really all we’ve talked about since the game got over.”

***Q: At the end of the first half where there were three guys in foul trouble [Josh Hubbard, Cameron Matthews, Tolu Smith III]. How much of that do you feel changed the game offensively down stretch coming towards halftime?***

**CJ:** “I mean that happens sometimes. You’ve got to deal with it. You know always that hindsight is 20-20. Maybe, I could’ve or should’ve played one of those guys with the two [fouls]. But we’ve got some guys that are foul prone, etcetera. It certainly added to the changing of the momentum. The other thing we talked about is if we could bottle up how we played the first 15 minutes of the first half, we’d have something going. It’s hard to do that, it’s easy to say. We just dissipated, and the second half we just couldn’t quite get it going like we did in the first half. We just didn’t get it done.”

***Q: After seeing Meechie Johnson play those two games last year, what are some of the differences you've noticed in his ability to score and find an open shot from what you saw last year to this year?***

**CJ:** "I think the addition of [Ta'lon] Cooper has really helped Meechie. Obviously, Meechie is a really good player. I love his game, and I love how he plays. But Cooper has really alleviated some responsibilities that Meechie had when I was here last year. It's really helped him free up to do what he does best which is score the basketball. He's got a combination of things that make him a good offensive player. He's a bully driver. He's got a great three-point percentages, and he shoots it with range. You can't foul him because he's an excellent free throw shooter. What I really like the most about him is just his motor. He's clearly their scorer. They've got other guys that can make baskets in different ways, but he's clearly their scorer. I think he's really comfortable and really confident in his role with this year's team."

***Q: It seemed like the low post was an emphasis early on. Is that an advantage when scouting this team that you think you guys probably had?***

**CJ:** "Oh, I don't know if it was necessarily an advantage that we thought we had. It's more again of how our team is constructed with Jimmy Bell [Jr.], and Tolu Smith [III] are hard to guard guys [on the inside]. You've got to make a decision if you're going to attract a double team or not. We're always curious going into the game if teams are going to do that. We certainly prepare for if they do, or if they don't. They went back-and-forth. Sometimes, they did, and sometimes, they didn't. I didn't think we handled it great throughout the game, but it definitely wasn't anything that stuck out to us. It's kind of how we play."

***Q: How do you push the guys to be more consistent in a 40-minute game going into SEC play?***

**CJ:** "Just urge, teach, try to figure it out. If I had the answer to that – if I could've fixed it already, I would've. Obviously I haven't been able to do that. It's just one of those things where you just keep film study and practice and try to replicate the good plays while eradicating the bad plays. Keep it moving down the road."

**Guard Josh Hubbard**

***Q: What are your initial takeaways from today's SEC opener?***

**JH:** "We started out good. We came out with a lot of energy, positive energy. We knew the game wasn't going to be easy. We made a lot of mistakes especially late in the second half. There were a lot of reasons why we lost this game. Those little details, it's not the turnovers that people think they are."

***Q: South Carolina finished with 15 or 16 offensive rebounds. The coaching staff prides you guys on doing. How disappointed was the staff about letting them get so many opportunities?***

**JH:** "The coaching staff did a great job of telling us that they were a team that offensive rebounds very well. We did it every day during practice. We just have to learn from this experience and get the scout [scouting report] into the game."

***Q: What felt different today after scoring 13 points after having a little bit of a lull to finish up the non-conference?***

**JH:** "It's just another game. The first SEC game, I'm getting used to it. It was very fun though to compete [in that atmosphere]."

***Q: You guys as a team have lost both true road games this year. What do you feel like is not being translated playing away from the Hump?***

**JH:** "We just have to come together. That's our team right there. We don't have the fanbase [when we play on the road]. We just have each other. It's us versus them. I feel like once we figure that out, we'll be good."