

2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State at Texas A&M – March 6, 2024

Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: How tough is it for your team to climb out of these first half holes especially on the road with the tough competition you face in the SEC?

CJ: “Yeah, it was déjà vu. I didn’t expect that. We obviously wanted to get off to a better start after our last outing on the road. And unfortunately, we didn’t. It was 7-0, and we just really had a hard time getting into any flow offensively.”

“We anticipated them to really double Tolu [Smith III]. That’s kind of what they do to most everybody [in the post]. Certainly with him, we expected that. We were still trying to, at least early in the game, get it down there and hopefully get a foul or two. [We wanted to] Kick it out and get them in rotations, but it didn’t work our way. So, we spent a lot of time doing that, which didn’t work for us. That contributed to us getting off to a poor start.”

“We hung around a little bit. We got back in the game [in the first half]. Then, they got another run, and we found ourselves down 13 [at the half]. Obviously, at that point, you feel like you’ve really got to come out of the gates and establish yourselves. We weren’t able to do that [early in the second half]. Before you know, we’re down 20, 22, 23 [points] and trying to come back.”

Q: How did your team come back? Down 23, and it looked like Texas A&M had control of the game. Then, you guys flipped the switch. What do you feel your team did right, or did you make any adjustments?

CJ: “You know, our kids, and I’m sure every coach feels that way that their team are competitors. They were going to continue to fight. Our huddles were actually really, really good all game long, which I’m proud of. That’s what I expect from our guys.”

“At the end of the day, we just dug ourselves too big of a hole. I think we got to three a couple times if I’m not mistaken. But, it was never coming down to where we had a chance to overtake them. We switched up our defenses a ton in the second half. It was all in at that point. We were going to throw everything we had at them and try to muck the game up and get them on their heels a little bit.”

“In the first half, they were 7-for-10 from three. They had guys like [Manny] Obaseki, [Andersson] Garcia and [Solomon] Washington, who I wouldn’t describe as prolific three-point shooters. But, kudos to those guys for stepping up and making 4 three’s in the first half where we weren’t really guarding them that closely. That’s why they got the big lead, in my opinion, because they were 7-for-10 from three.”

“We talked about it at halftime like I don’t anticipate them doing it again. I can’t imagine they’ll be able to shoot like that, at least all of those guys. Certainly, [Wade] Taylor IV and [Tyrece] Radford with their history, etcetera. Then, changing of the defenses and the ball wasn’t going in for them from three. When that happens, sometimes, you know you can crawl your way back in.”

Q: For most of the season, they've been a pretty slow team pace wise. Did you expect them to push it in the first half like they did?

CJ: "You never know what to expect, but they certainly did. A lot of that was off of our turnovers. We had seven turnovers in the first half. I don't know what the possessions were, but we were pretty high percentage. We were 24 percent in offensive turnovers [in the first half]. I know that's what they do, but that contributed to them playing fast. Certainly, everybody's going to try to convert. Then, they did. They converted on our turnovers, got some long rebounds and pushed the ball. They did a good job that way."

Q: In the second half you guys were able to control the boards. How much did Solomon Washington coming back into the game kind of even things out?

CJ: "Yeah, I'd have to look at the tape to know what his contributions were. But certainly, it had to be lift for their team because of his competitive nature. I don't know him personally, but just on tape, I know he's a competitive kid. He plays really hard and is a big part of what they do. So, I'm certain that that really helped them stave us off a little bit."

Q: In the second half, you guys got good contribution from Rams [Dashawn Davis] and D.J. [Jeffries]. How important is it getting looks from those guys off the bench, especially when some of the starters are not performing as they usually do?

CJ: "I mean those guys have started more than they haven't since we've been here the last two years. So, we don't look at them that way."

"I talked to D.J. prior to the game and said, 'Hey man, I think you're back to game shape.' After his injury and his comeback, I know the leg feels good now. You need to get out there and do what you do. I thought, especially in the second half, he looked like his old self again just grabbing balls off the glass, pushing the break, being athletic and getting downhill creating for some other guys."

"Then, Rams, if he doesn't make those shots in the first half, who knows what the lead is at that point. His confidence rose. Confidence is a special thing when you've got it, and it's tough when you don't. He was a big, big help for us tonight."

Q: With you saying D.J. is looking like his fully healthy self, have you thought about possibly putting him back into the starting lineup to help spark some of these early game moments?

CJ: "We've got one regular season game and one guaranteed SEC Tournament game left. It's not really been on my brain right now, but I'm not saying that it won't be in the next 48 hours."

Q: Do you have an opinion on how many SEC teams should or will get into the NCAA Tournament?

CJ: "You get that question a lot coming down the stretch when you're in the mix, if you will. My stock answer is it doesn't matter what I think, and they're not going to ask me what I think."

Q: You've talked these last couple weeks about the importance of stacking wins at this time of the year. How much pressure does needing a win add to Senior Day with a bunch of the guys playing their last game in the Hump?

CJ: "Yeah, I don't know. We'll have to see how it feels going into it. Certainly, it's something we'll talk about leading up to the game. But, the Kentucky game at home, was a big game. At Auburn was a big game. Tonight was the Super Bowl. Saturday's going to be no different, that's been the case for us all year long. You know this. We treat them like they're the biggest game of the year, regardless of who we're playing."

"Certainly, the difference is the opportunities are running out. We've got one more opportunity in the regular season to get a big win that we need for this particular team to increase our resumé and get ourselves in a better position [for the NCAA Tournament]. We'll talk plenty about it as we get ready to tip it off."

Forward Cameron Matthews

Q: This is the first time you guys haven't responded when facing a two-game losing streak this season. What do you feel like was different today compared to some of the other cases throughout the year?

CM: "I guess just our bite in the first half and just our silly mistakes, turning the ball over."

Q: Back-to-back games where you mentioned starting slow. How tough is that to climb out of these holes when you guys are going down 10-15 points in the first half?

CM: "It's really tough, especially in a league like the SEC, where top-to-bottom there's really good teams. Everyone's playing for something around this time of year. So, we just have to be better internally and do what we have to do."

Q: You personally had six turnovers which is a bit of an uncharacteristic game for you. What were you seeing, did they do anything defensively that caught you off guard?

CM: "I just went out there lackadaisical and wasn't making the right reads. I was just making mistakes. I take responsibility for that."

Q: You guys have another big game on Saturday with South Carolina and Senior Day with a chance to get back on track. Does this loss add more pressure to that game?

CM: "I wouldn't say so. I think we like to look at every game as a must win. But, with it just being the last game for seeding and the tournament and everything, I guess you can say there's a little bit more pressure."