

2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State vs. No. 17 South Carolina– March 9, 2024

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: Another close game where it was tied eight games. It seemed like every time your team tied it, South Carolina had an answer. How tough was it having to play from behind for a majority of the game?

CJ: “It’s like what I told the team and the radio folks after the game. It’s the same feeling I’ve got right now, it might be different after I watch the tape, these three games have all felt very similar in terms of how they’ve unfolded from my perspective. Auburn, [Texas] A&M, and tonight against South Carolina, the difference in the margin throughout the game [tonight] wasn’t as big, but that theme of playing behind and just fighting uphill all night long was the same.”

“We were within striking distance throughout the game tonight. In some of those other games, we had to mount runs to even get close to having a chance to win a basketball game. It felt the same, we just never had the upper hand in my opinion all night long. I think we led for 17 seconds. When you do that, especially at home, that confidence that comes with leading like that. Certainly, you can win in a variety of ways, and you can win from behind. But when you let that [opposing] team have that extra feeling, that extra confidence, it keeps the crowd from really hammering and influencing the game. They [the crowd] was awesome. They were really good, and we appreciate them coming out like they did. We’re certainly disappointed that we didn’t give them what they wanted and what we wanted.”

“But, even getting to overtime, they [South Carolina] won the tip and got a three. It was like ‘Here we go,’. We could never get ahead of them and have a chance to get any separation. So, again, a lot of it has to do with they’re a good basketball team. We knew that going in. There’s a reason they’ve won however many games that they’ve won. There’s a reason they’ve been ranked in the top 15 or 20 for the last few weeks of the season. They just know who they are. They play together really well, and they share the ball. We just couldn’t, we just couldn’t get the upper hand all night long.”

Q: How did B.J. Mack and Collin Murray-Boyles have so much success inside?

CJ: “They’re really good players in their own right, and they did it so efficiently. Mack had 25 [points] on 11 shots. Boyles had 19 [points] on 10 shots. They were 17-for-21 [from the field] and 8-for-9 from the free throw line. So, that’s what I would probably call efficient at the highest level that you could do it.”

“We tried to switch up coverages throughout the game, both in our ball screens and in our PED which is our post entry defense. We doubled them at times depending on who was guarding the block and who had the ball. Sometimes, we didn’t. They were really good at using that to create offense for them on the weak side. Sometimes, they throw it in, and they’re not even trying to score. They just skipped the ball, and they’re good at it. So, we worked on staying home with our weak-side guys rather than getting into some help situation. They handled it really well. Even though 30 [Murray-Boyles] doesn’t shoot it from the perimeter, he’s just a load. He’s an excellent player, and he’s only a freshman. He’s gotten a lot better as the conference season has unfolded.”

Q: What did you think of what you got with Cameron Matthews and Dashawn Davis on their Senior Day as they were honored before the game?

CJ: “They both competed, and they both emptied their tanks so to speak. We had a lot of guys that did that. To do it on the night that they were recognized, again with age who knows what the memory is going to be of this particular game, they can at least know that left it all on the floor.”

“That’s what we talked about before the game. This could or could not be the last time this group gets to play on this floor together. Let’s just leave everything we’ve got, and let these fans know how hard you compete, what this game means to you and what this team means to you. I thought we did that. We certainly had mistakes, and we certainly didn’t do everything perfectly. There was no lack of togetherness, there was no lack of effort, there was no lack of a want to and there was no quit or give up. There’s no issues within our team in terms of pointing fingers. I’m thankful for that, and I’m proud of that. Certainly, I know it is a bottom-line business and that it’s about winning. We all get that. I was proud of their effort, and that’s what I talked about at the end of the game.”

Q: How did you feel South Carolina was able to limit Tolu Smith III?

CJ: “They were very good at getting him off of his spots. They were very physical with him early in the game. When he did get a catch, it was way further away from the basket than he or I or our team would like. It was just not good for spacing and for his skill set for the most part. A lot of it had to do with their defense. He was 0-for-4 at halftime, he had some shots at the rim. They just didn’t go in for him. It was a very physical game around the basket like it usually is. But, he stuck with it. He didn’t get frustrated, and he got it going in the second half. He was 5-for-7 in the second half, I think. He just kept with it. Our guys did a better job of getting him the ball where he needed it.”

Q: You made some changes to the starting lineup and had three starters play over 40 minutes. What will it take to get more production for the guys who came off the bench?

CJ: “It’s a great question. With the recent changes, it doesn’t matter if they’re coming off the bench or if they’re starting. We just need to have productivity from everybody who has minutes, double figure minutes. Like Murph [KeShawn Murphy] didn’t play a ton to have a big influence on the game tonight. That wasn’t the plan. We basically played seven guys if you really break it down. Other than Jimmy [Bell Jr.] had a couple of runs there where he had four minutes. It wasn’t necessarily anything either one of those guys did or didn’t do. It was more that the guys who were in there that we felt like we were playing pretty well.”

“Going into a tournament format now, hopefully, we’ll have to play a back-to-back or have to play a back-to-back-to-back. Whatever the scenario is, you’re going to have to rely on more guys playing more minutes and being more productive.”

Q: Does it feel similar entering Nashville and the SEC Tournament in a must-win situation like last year with the NCAA Tournament picture? How much does it help having a veteran group of guys in a similar postseason situation as last year?

CJ: “Time will tell. Right now, that’s not what we’re thinking about. Now, we’re just trying to process what happened today. A lot of these kids have a lot of family in town. I just told them that it wasn’t their fault that we lost this game. They needed to not take it [the loss] out on anyone or not enjoy and be around the people that love them and are here for them. These people were here for the guys who were honored, or even the guys who weren’t. It was their last game [of the regular season]. I noticed the throng [of people] was a little bit bigger than we have had in some games. These people love you and are here for you. So, don’t make the rest of the day a miserable experience for them. We’ll figure out how we get through this. We didn’t really talk about going forward right now. We’ll have plenty of time to regroup and get ready.”

Guard Josh Hubbard and Forward Cam Matthews

Q: What is the frustration level after the game, and how do you flush that with the SEC Tournament coming up?

CM: "It's really frustrating knowing it was right there. It was in our hands. We couldn't really just grasp it and get the win. We're all a group of adults, and we know that this game doesn't make or break our season. We've got a big tournament coming up, SEC Tournament, make a good run in that. Everything is good. We've got 24 hours to dwell on it, whatever we got to do, and get back to work on Monday."

Q: What were B.J. Mack and Collin Murray-Boyles doing in the paint that made it difficult to defend them?

CM: "They're both really good players, really skilled. They've got size. So, they know how to use their size very well. So, it was just hard to maneuver around that and not get silly fouls and give them and-ones and stuff like that."

Q: Playing in a game like that against a team of that caliber so close and so tight. How can a game like this playing in overtime help you guys with the SEC Tournament coming up?

JH: "Experience wise, it's definitely great to know what that situation, and what situation you're in. So, in the future if we are ever in that situation again, we know what to do to complete it."

Q: Defensively, during these last four games, what do you feel like is not going right for you guys right now on that end of the floor?

CM: "Just Simple missed cues, missed assignments and not finishing the plays. Just little things that we have preached since July. Just mental mistakes that we're making, and that we're going to clean up."

Q: Josh, a great game for you today. How do you learn how to flush something like missing a late free throw in overtime and move onto the next game?

JH: "My teammates just push me through it. Obviously, it's a frustrating moment for me. My teammates kept my head high and kept me positive."

Q: What was the team's mindset heading into the game when it comes to the NCAA Tournament implications? Where their conversations amongst the team that a win today could have solidified that more?

CM: "We had small talks about it and where we are and what we need to do. We all collectively knew that this was a big win for us knowing how good South Carolina is, and how that would push the metrics for us. We've have been on a little streak, just get us out of that. It didn't work out of for us this time, but it's all good."

South Carolina Head Coach Lamont Paris

Q: Coach, it seems after Wednesday loss to Tennessee, some people might say there's not much to play for. How proud are you of this team for showing up and playing this caliber of ball?

LP: "They told me this is the most wins in a regular season of any team in school history. I didn't know that, I should probably know that. That's something to play for. We tied for second place in the SEC. I have an audio clip of someone broadcasting the game saying that our team wasn't in the upper echelon that involved Alabama, Kentucky, Auburn and Tennessee. We weren't in that group, we were in the next one. So, there's just a lot of pride from this group."

"We played with a chip on our shoulder the whole season. One day, they're going to say these guys are good. Maybe, they're saying it today. Maybe, it won't come for 20 years – we look back, and we've done things that have never been done before. I'm just really proud of these guys. There was a lot to play for. We didn't make this trip for no reason. It was a lot for us to play for. So, you could tell by the way we played that we wanted to win badly."

Q: This wasn't the style you've played all year. Your team put up 93 points and gave up more than usual, talk about how your team was able to win the game.

LP: "I think even early on both teams got into a rhythm. It's 38-37 at halftime, which is a great number for either of these teams. If you look back at 90 percent of the games, I bet you if these teams have 38 or 37 points going into halftime, they would be up double figures."

"Again, I think both teams had a good rhythm. I know we made some defensive mistakes, and I'm pretty sure that they probably feel like they did too. It was a good rhythm for both teams. They were doing some good stuff on the ball screens, and they were playing with some pace in the half court. It was a struggle for us to get stops, it just was. I challenged the guys in timeouts and in the huddles ... I just think both teams had a good rhythm."