

2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. UT Martin – November 11, 2023

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: You guys didn't make 10 three-pointers in a single game last year, and you've opened up this year with ten or more three's in both games. How has that opened things up on the court for you guys?

CJ: "When we started getting back together this fall in media and things like this, I told you all that we're going to shoot the three better. You all remember that? We were also last in the country. So, I had a lot of wiggle room, but I didn't know we'd shoot 39 of them in the second game out of the shoot."

"Historically, my teams have always taken a bunch of three's. I don't have the numbers. I'm not going to take the time to look at it. I would advise you not to too, but I think last year was probably the team that shot the least amount of three's that I've ever had."

"We've always believed in the three-point line, and how it's changed the game historically. I don't know if we'll shoot that many again going forward. We could have made 18 or 19 if we knocked them down. We have some guys that are good shooters and make them. I did think in the first half especially, we had two or three that were at least iffy at best, but it's going to happen sometimes. It sure is nice to have more guys wearing the Maroon and White that can knock down an open shot."

Q: You knew Josh Hubbard was going to help you this year as a dynamic player coming out of high school. What kind of player is he for this team as a true freshman? What can he add to this roster this year in his first season?

CJ: "I didn't know exactly; I don't believe in that. I've done this long enough. You have an idea, but you really don't know who you have until you're with them for months. That's why we get them in June and July. That's 8 weeks, and then fall. You get a feel of what they're about, who they are, and what their approach is."

"He's ahead of most freshmen across the country. He's in the higher percentile of being prepared to transition to this level of basketball. He's been preparing for this moment, this part of his career, his whole life. He's got an incredible work ethic, he's been raised at a high level. He understands the relationship between work and success. He's got a presence about him. He doesn't walk around and make decisions like a freshman. He's all in, and he understands being a part of the team."

"He's got a long way to go. He made some silly mistakes out there, freshman mistakes, but he doesn't make that many of them that often. He's just real comfortable. He's real comfortable in his own skin. He's real comfortable on the basketball court, and he's obviously off to a great start in a very very infant part of his career."

Q: You got 18 points and 18 rebounds out of Jimmy [Bell Jr.] and Gai [Chol]. Gai especially, was a guy we thought was going to be a raw prospect but he's playing a pretty high level. For a true freshman, what did you think of his performance tonight?

CJ: "I love him, I love him. He didn't know this, but when we signed him, our plan was to redshirt him. Our plan was to redshirt him all the way up until we had the injuries. At that point, his daily tutorials increased in their level of intensity from myself and the coaches. We just said 'Hey man, you're going to get thrown in the deep end. It wasn't the plan, but that's what's going to happen. We don't really have much of a choice, and he's been awesome.'"

"He's gotten better. I'm telling you almost every day he gets better. Every week for sure he makes strides. What I love the most about him is his approach. For a young freshman built like that playing up against grown men, like a lot of the guys we have that play his position are older and experienced, he has zero fear. He battles every single day. He's a sponge in terms of picking things up and listening and learning. He plays really really hard. He's got some strength issues and some balance issues, but for what we need right now I'm sure glad we had him. I think he possesses, which he's shown everybody, a really nice touch with the free throws and around the basket."

Q: What are you learning about this team early without three key contributors and playing a lot of new faces?

CJ: "We thought heading into the season that depth was going to be a positive for us this year with the added recruits and guys that came back. Fortunately, it is. We're having to test it right away with guys being out, etcetera, but I always tell them, 'Hey listen, if you can go in the game and more often than not move the needle in a positive direction, we're going to find minutes for you'."

"I love playing a bunch of guys. The best teams I've ever had are when we have multiple guys that you can throw in and not relying on one guy that can show up and score points for the team. I think it builds great comradery amongst the team, and the chemistry is a little bit better. It keeps them motivated in practice because they know they've got guys on their left and their right who are capable. If they don't bring it every day, their minutes can slip. We love having the depth that we assembled, and it's really helping us already."

Closing Statement

CJ: "I want to congratulate James Armstrong and his soccer players. I was following it all day long. I actually wanted to tweet it, but I felt like if I did that there'd be some people in the stands going, 'Why is he following the soccer game when he's about to play in 30 minutes?' But I wanted to know if they won or not, and I wanted them to hurry up so most people could come over to the Hump, too. I'm real happy for Coach Armstrong and their staff. It couldn't happen to a better guy."

Guard Josh Hubbard and Forward Cameron Matthews

Q: How different is it having someone different every night playing compared to last year?

CM: "I wouldn't say that it's different. We practice every day to be an everyday guy. I think that is the biggest difference from last year, just emphasizing a bit more."

Q: Josh, I am sure you have been in a groove like that before, but how did it feel to do it on this level in front of these fans and have a game like that?

JH: "It was definitely special for my first time to be in The Hump. The main thing for our first home game is we've got practice into the game. So, going from practice and doing the everyday thing that we do and then transitioning into the game."

Q: Josh, this is a different role for you to come in off the bench. How has this changed your mindset or is it a change from what you are used to in high school?

JH: "I do not have a problem with it. I look at it from a team perspective. I just want to help the team in any way possible."

Q: What did you think about Gai Choi's performance tonight?

CM: "Gai is an everyday guy. Coach Jans brags about him a lot, and [about] how much potential he has. He's an everyday guy. We knew how Gai could play. So, it's no big thing for us."

Q: What does knocking down three-pointers do for this do for the dynamic of this team moving forward?

CM: "It switches it up a little bit. Last year, people got a feel for us. So, they started to pack the paint. Just having guys that can knock down shots can ease up everything for everyone else."

Q: Do you feel like everyone is starting to come into their roles?

CM: "I think we're starting to figure out our roles a little bit more. I have 100 percent faith in everyone on our team. Whoever is thrown out there, we have a good candidate. I don't think we'll have any drop-offs there."

Q: How helpful is it to have people in the backcourt who can play the one and the two?

JH: "It's helpful when we all know the one and two spots. We can have a lot of depth with that just knowing your spot."

UT Martin Head Coach Ryan Ridder

Opening Statement

RR: "Give credit to Mississippi State and Coach Jans. Those guys are a top 25 program for a reason. Coming in and playing them on opening night, I thought it was a great environment. Obviously, they're one of the most physically talented and tough teams we played I thought our guys competed really hard. We struggled and shot 3-of-25 from three. To beat anybody on the road, you've got to play a little better. I thought our guy's effort was good. Give credit to Mississippi State, they're a really good basketball team."

Q: What did you see in solid performances from KK Curry and Jordan Sears tonight?

RR: "They're really quality players. KK has been with us for three years, and Jordan is obviously a returner. Those two guys are two of the better players in our league, and they're guys that have been in this environment before. They're kind of accustomed to this, so no surprise from those guys."

Q: Your team came away with 28 points in the paint and 14 offensive rebounds. What were your thoughts on your spacing tonight, and what was working inside?

RR: "I thought our spacing was pretty good. We just struggled, shooting 3-of-25 from three. When you get to the free throw line 25 times on the road against a high major opponent, you feel pretty good about that. Our thing is we drive, and we draw fouls. Typically, we make some more shots. Again, I'm not discouraged by the result tonight. I thought we did some good things, and we've just got to get a little better."