

**2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**  
**Mississippi State vs. Washington State – November 18, 2023**  
**Hall of Fame Tipoff Tournament Semifinals**

**Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans**

***Q: Can you speak on the physicality of today's game, and how did Dashawn Davis' bucket right before halftime change the complexion of the game?***

**CJ:** "I thought the way we ended the half overall [was great]. Certainly, Dashawn was the final basket. But if I'm not mistaken, it was tied [30-30]. Then, we went up six going into the break and really finished the half well, which we didn't have in the last outing. We had a lot of momentum. The locker room was fired up, and we had the right tone. We didn't act like it was over or anything like that, and we had the right mindset."

"You mentioned the physicality, and we saw it on video. It's all we talked about. This was going to be the most physical game we played thus far. We'll have way better and more physical games, but I thought our guys handled it pretty well considering the circumstances. They didn't back down. We did a pretty good job on the glass. We didn't give them a whole lot of room around the basket with the bigs anyway. They certainly drove on us too much, but I'm pretty pleased. I thought this was our best game we played thus far."

***Q: What does Jimmy Bell Jr. bring to this team?***

**CJ:** "He's physical. He doesn't back down from anybody. When Tolu [Smith] was healthy in the summer, you could imagine what that looked like. I was watching from afar going, 'This is awesome, these kids are battling each other.' They're both high-level competitors, but they're both really good kids. So, there's no BS going on. They respect one another ... hopefully, we'll get back to that."

"He [Bell Jr.] was 2-of-6 [from the field] and 7-of-8 from line, but they had to foul him to get him there. They did a pretty good job on him on the offensive glass. He didn't have any, but he had eight defensive boards. He played really well."

"He played 29 minutes. I don't know off the top, but I can't imagine he's played a lot games where he's played 29 minutes. So, kudos to him for getting himself in physical and mental shape enough to play those kind of minutes considering how he's built."

***Q: What does Gai Chol bring to this team? Wasn't the plan originally to Redshirt him?***

**CJ:** That was the plan, your 100 percent correct, great analysis. He gave us quality minutes. He keeps doing it. The fouls, I'll have to see on film, I didn't see it. It was a pretty physical game. So, I questioned those, but he also showed some skill level. He isn't afraid. He rose up like he's been there, done that. He's only four games into his Division I career as a true freshman playing the five [position]. I love him, I love coaching him, I love being around him and I'm glad we have him."

***Q: Why do you like to play so many players?***

**CJ:** "I get asked that a lot. We're not the only ones that play a lot of people, but we tend to play more than the average and more than most programs year-to-year. And I love it. I just believe in the comradery of the team. I believe it keeps people motivated. I believe that the chemistry, and then you can handle injuries. You can handle long term and short term. The other part of it is, to be honest with you, I believe in competition every day. The number one guy has a huge disparity of talent and ability between him and the number two. He's not getting that much better. I also want the number one guy looking over his shoulder every day going, 'I can't let off the pedal, because old boy is coming right on me.' There's a lot of different factors, and we have a lot this year."

***Q: How big was going 21-for-25 from the free throw line as a team in this game?***

**CJ:** “Yeah, it’s big. I’m to the point where when we missed a couple in the first half. I was like, ‘Here we go again,’ internally. Then, I looked at the stats, and we were 8-of-11. It isn’t like we missed a bunch of them in the first half. It makes you a better basketball team when you can make them.”

***Q: Are you coaching them again on free throws this year?***

**CJ:** “Absolutely not, I delegated that and rightfully so. I really want to give a well-earned shoutout to Coach Miller especially. He did the work this week. It wasn’t a normal week for us. For me, I was away from the team for a little bit [earlier in the week]. My staff and I just talked about it with the players in the locker room – when you have a program, people step away for whatever reason and it keeps moving forward. I don’t care who it is. Then, you’re having a program. You’re having success, and I was really proud of the way they handled their business all week long, and certainly today.”

***Q: What are you looking at with Northwestern or Rhode Island tomorrow?***

**CJ:** “To be honest with you, in years past, I would’ve had an idea on both of these teams. But in this particular tournament, I just haven’t been able to look ahead. I’ve got a veteran staff. I know they’re working diligently behind the scenes. I’m getting to watch them first-hand [scouting wise this afternoon]. I love the fact that we played early. With recovery, we’ll have more time. We’ll get to see them [our next opponent] in person. It’ll be a crash course for me in the next 24 hours to get with this scheme and see who we play.”