

**2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**  
**No. 25 Mississippi State vs. McNeese – December 14, 2024**

**Head Coach Chris Jans**

***Q: What did you see from your squad on the offensive end of the floor tonight?***

**CJ:** “We didn’t make it public, but Coach Purcell and I got together before this afternoon and decided we’d make sure that the fans were engaged for all 80 minutes of both games. If you believe that, I’ve got some swamp land I can sell you [laughter].”

“I’m glad we won. It was a hard-fought game. I’m proud of our guys for staying connected when it wasn’t looking good. The momentum was in their [McNeese’s] favor. They did a heck of a job in preparation for this game. They put their guys in really good positions to take advantage of some things that we do defensively. There were probably more adjustments made in the second half of this game than two or three games combined.”

“We usually have a plan that we adjust our defense going into a game, and don’t adjust it that much in-game very often. Today, they made us. Fortunately, our guys took the memo from the huddle and went out there and executed it defensively. We were able to finally get enough stops. In my opinion, we won the game because we made free throws in the second half. That was a big difference maker for us. We made 10 baskets and 17 free throws in the second half, and we were able to get enough stops to hold them off.”

***Q: What have you seen from Josh Hubbard defensively and his improvement on that side of the ball from last season to this season?***

**CJ:** “Yeah, I hope people take notice of it. I’ve challenged him quite a bit recently. That was the thing I said in the fall. When people asked what he’s better at now, I said that he’s more explosive, he’s more athletic, he’s assumed a leadership role on the team and he’s becoming a better defender. It’s been up and down this year. But just recently, we’ve had a couple of sit-downs with video talking about his future and what he wants to be and wants to be known for. He’s been better in practice, and you could see it tonight. He was more physical on the ball. He was more engaged off the ball in getting in the gaps and trying to scrape at the ball to get some deflections and hopefully some turnovers. It’s nice that people are seeing that from him.”

***Q: What can you say about RJ Melendez’s effort tonight and throughout the season?***

**CJ:** “Yeah, he’s shown some fire, which is great to see for us. He’s getting more and more comfortable. I mean this is his third school in four years. Each place comes with different standards and different expectations. He’s a wonderful kid who works really hard. My confidence in him just continues to grow. He would’ve played more minutes, but he had some foul issues that we had to deal with. That was a big rebound like you said. He was fired up about it, and hopefully that’ll just continue to elevate his play from here.”

***Q: Did tonight’s game remind you of games from the last two seasons where you had to win the games with defense?***

**CJ:** “You must’ve been in our locker room, because that’s what I talked with the guys about. I’m accustomed to this, not just here but in other places as well. We haven’t talked about rock fights or making a game an alley fight. It ended up being that way, and we try to make it that way, to be honest with you. They mucked the game up, they switched their defense up and played really hard. They changed their defense as the game went on. Seeing it in person and seeing it on film is a very different thing. It came down to possession basketball, where every shot and every rebound was meaningful. We strung enough good possessions to come out on top.”

**Q: *Does Cameron Matthews do so much for this team that we take all that he does for granted?***

**CJ:** “I don’t know if you all do, but I don’t. I appreciate Cam, and everyone in our team room knows how valuable he is. If you ask everybody this question, everyone feels more comfortable when he’s on the court. He’s our leader, and we want him to be our personality for the most part. He wasn’t available early last game. Then, today he had two fouls, and it just felt different.”

“I’ve said this before, he doesn’t get enough credit for his IQ. It’s off the charts. He has as high of a basketball IQ as I’ve ever been around in my 32-year coaching career. He’s got this aggressiveness and athletic ability with an emerging skillset. You combine that with an understanding of what’s going on out there, so it makes him invaluable for us.”

**Forwards Cameron Matthews and RJ Melendez**

**Q: *What’s it like coming out with a win in a tough situation like this?***

**RJM:** “It’s great honestly. We were able to come back, stick [together] as a team having everybody’s back, trusting coach’s plan and being able to execute.”

**CM:** “Great team win.”

**Q: *Talk about that last sequence leading up to your rebound.***

**RJM:** “They were preaching on the bench that the play is going to come out wide open, but we have to crash [the glass]. They’re not going to hit. So, that’s all I did. I just listened to them, crashed and the ball came to my hands.”

**Q: *What changed defensively towards the end of the game?***

**CM:** “With this team, when we get a few stops and get the crowd behind us, I feel like we get superpowers or something. I don’t know. We just kind of clamp down on them, and they start missing.”

**Q: *What are you seeing in the team’s slow starts?***

**RJM:** “I would say it’s definitely on us. Coach [Jans] tells us every time after the game when we watch film that we have to stop having slow starts. Like we start the second half every time, we have to start the first half just like that. I would say it’s definitely on us. We just got to be better in the [first] half and come out with that energy and don’t wait to get smacked in the face to respond.”

**Q: *What was Coach Jans’ message to the team after trailing by eight points in the second half?***

**CM:** “It was more so us as the players. I was preaching to the guys to keep playing defense, keep clawing, keep scratching and they will fold. They’re not used to playing against a team like us. We just tried to stick to our principles, and we knew that we were going to wear them down.”

**Q:** *Did shooting feel different here in this venue?*

**RJM:** “I would say we just weren’t hitting shots. We were getting the looks that we wanted, but we just weren’t hitting shots. We got them in foul trouble early. So, we were saying to attack the paint, get fouled and get to the free throw line.”

**Q:** *Was some of the missed shots due to the pressure the team were putting on them defensively?*

**CM:** “I feel like that’s just playing 40 minutes of Mississippi State basketball and just wearing them down. Like I said earlier, those things take a toll on teams. I guess it just worked in our favor this game.”

**Q:** *How do you feel about getting the steals record tonight?*

**CM:** “It’s been a long journey. I’ve played a lot of games in this uniform. I’m grateful for the program and the University.”