

2025-26 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. Long Island – December 16, 2025

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: How do you see Sergej Macura getting more comfortable with this style of basketball and slowing down in each game?

CJ: "I was happy for him. He was obviously more than solid tonight. You guys that have been following us know that we've struggled at times with who should be in the rotation at some of those spots, and he plays a spot that we struggle with at times. It's not as solid as they would like, or probably that we would like. He made a strong case that he needs to be, for the short term at the minimum, a guy that is playing more minutes than maybe he had."

"He's such a fun kid to coach. He's a throwback about whatever you need coach. Whatever you need, I'll do, and he means it. Like, he really, really means it. He's super coachable and competes. Certainly, he's not perfect like any of our players are, but he's got a high, high, want to part of him."

Q: What are you seeing late in these last two games where your team have been able to make the plays down the stretch to win the game?

CJ: "I mean, winning is hard, every coach will tell you that. I'm sure you've heard that a thousand times, and it is. We had great respect for LIU coming in. I mean, the film jumped out at us. I mean, they were 6-4. They've got really good players, and they've got big guards. They've got a lot of in between guys. They play very aggressively. They play with a brashness and a confidence in them. I told them for 48 hours, like understand what's walking in the door. They don't care about what league you play in, or what's on the front of your chest. They're coming in here trying to win, like everybody is, but they got a swagger to them."

"Winning – I thought getting off to a good start was going to be a key factor. Like most teams, especially being around the road, if it doesn't go your way sometimes that takes away some of that brashness and confidence. It did, but we just weren't able to hold them down. So, credit to them for fighting back and obviously making a game, after the first eight minutes for the rest of the night."

Q: A handful of these games against mid-major teams have been pretty close or have come down to the finish. Is that a concern for you how these games are playing out?

CJ: "Yeah, I mean, sure. I'm concerned about every game we play in. We're trying to get better and play better for longer and have as good of a result as we can. We're just going to keep working, grinding, tinkering and developing our players. Whatever our potential is for this unit, we're going to try and get as close to that potential as we can like with every team that we have ever coached. That is the job description, and we will continue to try to do that."

"Certainly, Saturday's game will look a lot different than today's with the quality of players and the athletes and the skill level they're bringing to town. Certainly, the SEC is within eyesight now. But, as you all know, we take it one game at a time. We are going to learn and grow from this and continue to try to get to that level."

Q: This is the sixth or seventh straight game both Epps and Hubbard have scored in double digits. How have you seen those guys play and gel together on the offensive end?

CJ: "We've had some games where they both weren't out there, and it's not nearly as much fun when they both aren't available. They are learning to play with each other, and it's hard to guard both of them when they are out there. They had some good moments together tonight."

"We had played with that three-guard lineup quite a bit against Utah. Unfortunately, we didn't get to do that quite as much tonight with Ja'Borri not being able to go in the second half, but they are definitely starting to learn to play off one another."

Q: Coach, the team 23-for-30 from the free throw line tonight, 77 percent. I know you had to be pleased with that number. Was being aggressive and getting the line a part of the game plan?

CJ: "I was proud, and it was part of our plan tonight. It's the first thing I told the players. I was like, 'Hey man, 23-for-30, okay people won't be emailing me asking to be the free throw coach this week. I was happy about that. We work on it and they knocked them down. We had some big ones. We made a lot of free throws if I'm remembering correctly down the stretch, but our mindset was probably more this game than any other game that we've played, they didn't have a lot of rim protection. Obviously, they weren't as big as some of the other teams we're playing, but it was trying to get to the rim, trying to get to the paint as many times and as much as we could. Try to win the free throw game, and obviously we did that."

Guard Jayden Epps and Forward Sergej Macura

Q: How has it been getting more comfortable coming back from injury trying to get back into a groove?

SM: "After the short injury I had, it was nothing special just needed to push through it. The staff did a great job helping me get back on the court. I feel like the last couple of weeks I have just been getting comfortable with the way we have been playing, faster pace, moving the ball. Just starting to feel good and trying to give Coach all the reason to let me play more and get confidence back to help my team out."

Q: It was a close game all the way to the finish. What do you think was the difference in the last few minutes for you guys?

JE: "I feel like we played a good team. It's a good team no matter who you play on any given night. It's college basketball. Any team can come and step up. We made a few mistakes down the stretch, but I feel like we dug it out and we won. We stayed with it, we fought and we won."

Q: It seems like every game you guys either struggle to maintain a lead or keep the building that lead. What do you think is the cause of that?

JE: "Like you said, staying locked in for the whole 40 minutes. Keeping our foot on the gas. We talk about it all the time, and we stress it to each other. It just goes back to the drawing board and seeing what we have to do when we have a lead or when we have a team where we can pull away and make the game where they can't come back. We have to just keep working on that and trying to stay locked in when we have a lead."

Q: It's been two straight games where you guys have made the plays down the stretch to hold a team off. How much confidence does that give you all moving forward?

JE: "That's what we've been talking about. We're trying to find some momentum. We've been inconsistent, on and off, so we've been trying to find some momentum and try to stay consistent. Try to bring everybody together. Like Serge said, we've been in the gym trying to build our offense and build our comradery, which we have been doing all this summer and up until this point, but we have just been trying to keep getting better and keep with it."