

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes

Mississippi State at No. 21 Memphis – December 21, 2024

Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: When you guys went on a 16-1 run early in the game, how much did the defense effect the game and play apart in the strong start?

CJ: "We're best when we play on that end of the floor, like most programs that emphasize it. You can score off your defense and take some pressure out of your offense. When you're on the road, you can take the crowd out of it, which is very nice. It revs us up if our motors are going. Then, we get opportunities to get turnovers and score. We were 9-for-18 from three in the first half. It's contagious. One or two guys make a few, and it catches on, which is what happened in the first half."

Q: Does a road win like this give you confidence that you can be a top SEC team?

CJ: "I'm not thinking about it too much. I have a lot of respect for [Memphis] Coach [Penny] Hardaway, and the way they've been playing. They've got some incredible wins and are coming off a tough road swing. We had an extra day to prepare for them than they did. They had to travel Wednesday night after a game, which was good timing for us. We've been off and have been preparing for this game. So, we wanted to play a good game in front of their home crowd, which we were able to do."

Q: What did you do on perimeter defense that was able to limit their three-point shooting ability so well?

CJ: "We talked a lot about it going into the game. Their numbers were mind-boggling, I think they were second or third in three-point percentage in the country going into the game. That was a big focus of ours. For us, it usually goes back to how we're guarding the ball."

"In one-on-one situations or on the ball screen, it may look like someone gave up a three, and that it's one guy's fault, but it really isn't because we broke down earlier. Today, we really focused on keeping [Tyrese] Hunter and [Colby] Rogers from getting catch-and-shoot three's. We knew that [P.J.] Haggerty was going to get downhill, and we didn't want to help too much when we're one pass away from either of those guys. You've got to pick your poison with them; you can either get Haggerty in the gaps or cover the three's, and that's what we did."

Q: What does it feel like to have Riley Kugel as another scoring option when Josh Hubbard and Claudell Harris Jr. aren't hitting shots?

CJ: "It's a big bonus. Consistency is what we're looking for from him, and all of our players, for that matter. He hasn't been performing well in the past few games, but everybody knows he's capable of it. He's been in these situations in this conference before. For whatever reason, he was ready to go today. He shot that first one, and we knew we had to get him the ball. He just looked so pure and so confident. Luckily for us, he was passing the ball better. He was getting some deflections and tips and got in a better stance than he had in the past. Hopefully, that can give him confidence going forward."

Q: Does this game show what your team can potentially be, or is it too early to say?

CJ: "I think it's too early to say. We're certainly happy that we've played our best against the best competition because, in this conference, this is what we're going to face every night. It's been well-documented where the SEC is at compared to every other conference this year. Now, can we do it over the course of 10 weeks, where it's like this every single time? I mean no disrespect to anyone else we've played, but our guys haven't played the same every time out. It's a different competition. I've liked how we've played to this point, but who knows how it'll unfold."

Q: Where the turnovers by Memphis something you did defensively, or do you feel they were more self-inflicted on their end?

CJ: "Gosh, I don't know. I'll have to watch the tape to really be able to tell. That was a big goal of ours, though. It was something that we do when we're playing our best. We're getting handsy and getting in the passing lanes to make it difficult for the other team."

"I think, more importantly, our guys were really hungry today. They were excited to play in this venue against a team like Memphis. It's easy to get your team going when your opponent has a 6-1 record against [NCAA NET] Quad 1 and 2 teams. They've beaten the likes of UConn and Michigan State. I wasn't concerned about our guys being ready to play today because of that."

Q: Did it feel like a home game when you heard the Maroon and White chants especially early on during the first half?

CJ: "I didn't hear them until the end when there were a couple of minutes left. We talked about it before the game, because we knew we'd have a good crowd. If we play well enough, they won't have anything to cheer about. Most crowds don't get after it if their home team isn't playing well. We knew that we'd also have enough folks up here that if we play well, they'll start cheering louder, and that's what happened this afternoon."

Q: You pulled Michael Nwoko out early and kept KeShawn Murphy in for most of the game, what did you see from him especially defensively today?

CJ: "He was great. He only went 6-for-14 [shooting] but had some rebounds and some blocks. He's disappointed that he missed some around the basket that we ran for him. He felt good. So, we ran a few plays for him that he didn't finish. Mike [Michael Nwoko] didn't get off to a great start and had some foul trouble. Murph [KeShawn Murphy] had been playing well. So, we just went with that lineup."

Forward Cameron Matthews and Guard Riley Kugel

Q: What did you see after the game was tied at 5-5 when you guys went on a 16-1 run?

RK: "To be honest, we were really just flowing with each other. Everyone was crashing the boards and pushing the ball. That's how we really like to play basketball. So, it was nice to have a good start".

Q: You were up by 20 points early in this game, what was the key to holding them off for so long?

CM: "They're a great team, and we knew that they were going to make a few runs since they're at home. We just wanted to play our best and stay true to our principles. We got good stops and decided to go on some runs of our own."

Q: Riley, it seems like a lot of guys on this team can take over the game. How did it feel to have the hot hand today?

RK: "It felt good. I mean, it always feels good when you've got a hot hand. My teammates just put trust in me. I went out there, and I feel like I showed what I'm capable of doing. To be honest, I was just having fun with my brothers out there."

Q: Cam, being from Olive Branch, what did it feel like coming into FedEx Forum and having the performance you did?

CM: "I think this was my first time playing in the FedEx Forum, but it always feels good to come home. I had a lot of family in attendance, and I just wanted to put a show on for them."

Q: You held Memphis to 66 points, what was it that made you feel confident you could stop this offense?

CM: "Personally, I can say that we went into the game not worried about their offense, but how we can play the best defense we can. I feel like we're a defensive program, and we've proved that over the years. We just wanted to be the best defensive team that we could be."

Q: Both of you had good performances inside in the second half, how did that open things up after they focused on your three-point shooting in the first half?

RK: "When you get guys shooting three's like we were, it gets guys to expand the floor a little bit. There were a lot of the shots that we wanted to take. We knew we had to get open and execute them. We were just running our offense, and it kept flowing."

Q: Does this performance give you confidence that potentially you can be one of the top teams in the SEC this season?

CM: "Oh yeah. Heading into this season, we had a few goals. One of them is to try and to compete for a [SEC] championship. We felt like we could compete in the SEC. I think we came out today, and we were able to prove it."