

## 2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. No. 18 Pittsburgh– December 4, 2024

### Head Coach Chris Jans

***Q: You talked to us earlier in the week about wondering how your team would respond. I guess you didn't have to wait too long to get your answer, especially on the defensive end. Did you see that coming out of practice with what you saw last weekend?***

**CJ:** "I didn't know, I didn't know. That's the response that we wanted, but we didn't know what it was going to look like. We obviously were a little down on returning from Phoenix and not winning the final game. Like I said, we can handle getting beat by someone that's better than us. We played, and we competed. We did the things that we normally do. If we get beaten by a better team for 40 minutes that particular night, shake their hand and move on and get to the next one. That wasn't the feeling that we had, and I think that they realized watching the tape once we got back and got reorganized. So, I didn't know. I didn't know exactly what the response was going to be. I'm certainly glad it was how it unfolded tonight."

***Q: You guys were able to dominate the boards and the paint. KeShawn Murphy and Michael Nwoko both had big nights. What have you seen from both of them in the way that they have developed during the season so far, and how they fit into the system?***

**CJ:** "We've talked about Murph [KeShawn Murphy] a lot. He's had some nice games. It's nice to see him do it against a power-four competition. Mike has been getting better and better. We've talked about him since he arrived. Our young bucks were going to be a work in progress, and their mantra was to get better every day."

"Mike's obviously gotten the line share of the minutes of those three young guys, but he showed tonight what he is capable of. He only played 18 minutes if I'm not mistaken. He had 18 and 11 in 18 minutes. That's the next steeple chase that he has to get over. He's really good when he is fresh. Unfortunately for him and unfortunately for us right now, when he's not fresh it drops way too much. His efficiency, his attention to detail, his demeanor and just his overall game. We've talked about it plenty, but I've got to watch it because I can't play him that long before he tires out. He's just not as good of a basketball player. That's the deal with him. He's got to get in better shape, or he's got to get a little mentally tougher so he can play at a higher level for a longer period of time. But the thing I love about him is he's a wonderful kid. He's a hard worker. He's gotten better. He's a sponge, he wants more. He wants to watch film, he wants extra and he's got that kind of approach. When you are a young person like that, usually you are going to climb the ladder as time goes on."

***Q: RJ Melendez played some good defense tonight and hit a big three, what kind of strides have you seen him make since this summer?***

**CJ:** "He can be a great defender. He's so fast, and he's so rangy. I don't think he was ever talked about as being a good defender. For him to be as good as he is for us, that's an area of the floor that we need him to focus on. He made his first shot and got a little excited. Then, he jacked up a few after that, but he settled in."

"RJ's become a Swiss Army Knife for us, playing multiple positions. Because of his length, we can play a small ball four with him. Obviously, we can put him at his natural position at the three. He's become a quick enough defender that he could even slide in there and play some two. That's a luxury, having players who can do out and do those kinds of things."

***Q: Are you more excited that you scored 90 points or that you held them to 57?***

**CJ:** "I haven't thought about it. I just really wanted to play well. I was kind of out of sorts today, but I just didn't know. That taste in my mouth was still pretty heavy, and I didn't know how we would respond. Practice is one thing, but under the lights is another."

"I thought our students were off the charts. It was the most student-claimed tickets we've had thus far. I certainly appreciate the other folks who attended the late start. We feel it, you can feel it. I would love for our team to have Cameron Matthews' personality this year. That's our goal. And tonight, I feel like that's how we played. We had his personality, and that got on the floor. The more nights that we can play like that, the more successful we're going to be."

***Q: What are your thoughts on what you've built in regard to fan support?***

**CJ:** "Every coach in America gets in-front of the crowd and says they want to build community support, and I was no different. I thought we backed up our words, especially with the student body. We've been really active on campus, trying to build relationships with different groups."

"I tell our guys all the time how important it is to recruit the fans. How you interact with them makes a big difference in if they're going to support you. I've been super impressed with the presence that our students have, and not just them, obviously."

"I think our whole fan base embraces the blue-collar style. I think it resonates a lot with people around here. Hopefully, that will continue. Hopefully, we got a little more for SEC, but I thought for a late start, especially coming off a loss, that it was really good. I think a lot of it comes from our administration. Dr. Keenum and Zac Selmon have put us in a position to get big players and, equally important, we've been able to keep our guys because of the experience and amenities they have."

**Forwards Cameron Matthews and KeShawn Murphy**

***Q: Cam, when we spoke to Coach Jans earlier this week, he said he didn't know how you would respond after Butler. What was practice like this week?***

**CM:** "We had some rough days, but we all knew what we had to do. We had to bounce back and not let these losses spiral and turn into more losses. We just got into the lab, and we got after it."

***Q: Cam, huge night for Michael Nwoko. He goes for 18 [points] and 11 [rebounds] in just 18 minutes. What have you seen from him development-wise?***

**CM:** "We all feel like he has it. Sometimes, he kind of relaxes. We just push him every day and try to gripe at him every day. Just do that all the time because we know he's got it in him. He just has to go out there and execute."

***Q: KeShawn, you set another new scoring career-high tonight with 20 points. What's been different for you?***

**KM:** "Nothing new. I come in, and I just go to work every day. Every time I get a chance to play with these guys, I'm blessed to be able to do that with this team."

***Q: Cam, it seemed like you set the tone early with the physicality, especially on the defensive end. How important was it to set the tone with the physical play that you had?***

**CM:** "I feel like that has to be how we play every game. I feel like that's how we've been the last two years with this new coaching staff. I feel like that's what we have to do every night to play our best."

***Q: KeShawn, watching you play tonight, it felt like you were really comfortable with the ball in your hands. Did you feel that way?***

**KM:** "Yeah, I feel like I'm starting to get comfortable and finding my role on the team. Who I am and what I can and can't do on the floor. I'm really trying to open up space for others and for us as a team."

***Q: Cam, KeShawn was talking about his own comfort level. What's the comfort level with this rotation you guys have?***

**CM:** "Personally, I think this is the deepest team I've had since I've been in college, not just under [Coach] Jans. I feel like we have the utmost faith in everybody who steps on the court. Anyone that goes out there, we're really comfortable with each other."

***Q: KeShawn, how far has this defense come over the course of the season?***

**KM:** "It's not just me, it's a team effort. We all just have to be and stay on the same page. Everything takes care of itself."

**Pitt Head Coach Jeff Capel**

***Q: Did things change in the second half after a tough start in the first half?***

**JC:** "No, it didn't. They boat raced us right from the beginning. We ran into a buzzsaw as a team coming off a loss against Butler, and they were ready to go. I thought we were ready to go, but we just ran into a buzzsaw. We couldn't get into anything offensively. We couldn't rebound the basketball. Those were points of emphasis coming in. First half, they had 32 points in the paint. It seemed like they made everything. If they didn't, they offensively rebounded, and they got it. Terrific performance by them and not a good performance by us."

***Q: You've been involved in these games. These are the games you just throw away the tape and rip up the stat sheet. They got out hustled, their physicality, and they didn't match the intensity. To have those games it's time to go back to the drawing board, right?***

**JC:** "My father used to say when I was younger and he was coaching that sometimes you're the bug, sometimes you're the windshield. We were the bug tonight. We got crushed. You've got to clean it off. You have to move on, and that's what we have to do. We have an unbelievable opportunity coming up on Saturday, our first conference game. We've got to learn from this, that's the big thing, we've got to learn. Again, I'm certainly disappointed in the outcome, but give credit to Mississippi State, they were terrific."

***Q: We talk about physicality and all that stuff that took place. They ran their stuff, got to their spots and moved the ball. What they did on the offensive end, obviously worked as well but they really executed as a team?***

**JC:** "Yes, they did, they really did. We knew the level of physicality they play with. We talked about that. We knew what they do defensively. It's similar to some teams like Florida State in our league. They were really, really good. They took you out of everything, and we had to play offense. They switched things."

"They're big, and they're athletic. We knew that they averaged 14 offensive rebounds per game. That was a point of emphasis, but we didn't do it. That's the bottom line. We didn't execute our game plan, and the things that we wanted to do. They did it at a very high level, that's on me, I've got to do a better job of having my team prepared because we didn't play like we've played all year."

***Q: What was it like to see the young guy, (Brandin) Cummings coming alive like that?***

**JC:** "I thought he showed some real fight. I thought Papa (Amadou Kante) showed some fight. There's a level of physicality when you are playing against really good teams that you have to play with, and we've got to be able to do that. We've got to be able to rebound the basketball. Their three front-line guys combined for 31 rebounds, and 13 of those were from the offensive end. Our three front-line guys had three rebounds total, one defensive. You aren't going to win a game that way. So, we've got to have to be better across the board, from me to every guy on our team. We've got to be better, and we've got to learn from this."