

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. Prairie View A&M – December 8, 2024

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: What were you seeing on the defensive end during today's game?

CJ: "It was not a very good performance defensively for a combination of reasons. They've got good players. When you give good players confidence, bad things happen. Some of it was that. Some of it was players not being where they should be positionally. We were showing some stuff early that I thought was ready for game action but wasn't."

"Confidence is something you search for all the time. When you have it as a team or as a player, it can really help you. It's fleeting for most of us, but I thought the early confidence they had gave them a boost. I felt like they rode that. Near the end, we had a chance to get up 15-18 points and close it out, but they wouldn't go out that way. So, kudos to them and their coaching staff for playing the way they did."

Q: Was the plan was to try and give Cam [Cameron Matthews] some rest today? When he got in there, what did you see from his minutes?

CJ: "Well, the situation was that Cam had been dealing with a foot injury for weeks. With the length of time between this game and our next game, we decided to try and give him some rest. He had the last three days off, he didn't even touch a ball. But I also sat down with him today and told him that we were going to have him suit up. So, he needed to stay locked in mentally."

"I didn't want to have to play him, but I knew he would be available if we needed him to win this game. That asterisk of the plan had to be activated in the first half. I told him to get ready, because I wasn't sure if I would need him or not. I just confided in some of the staff, and he certainly had a big impact on the game."

Q: What does Shawn Jones Jr. bring to this team?

CJ: "He's one of our better defenders. He's got great length and great experience. He can guard multiple positions, and he usually brings the energy. He played pretty well tonight. He gave up a few shots late, which kind of surprised me, but he hit a couple of three's for us, which were huge. He made some good decisions driving the ball. Unfortunately, he didn't stick it in the net every time, but he's got great experience. It seems like he often ends up in that group of five that is on the floor when the game gets tough."

Q: How fun is it to watch as a coach when Josh Hubbard and Claudell Harris Jr. have the type of games they had today?

CJ: "Yeah, it makes it easier for all of us when we're not just relying on Josh. Even [RJ] Melendez is starting to get more confident with his three-ball, and when he rises up to shoot the ball. If Shawn Jones can do some things like he did today, it'll even be better for all of us."

"I'm happy for Claudell. He's such a hard worker. He hasn't had the offensive nights he's wanted since the opener, but he gave us a big lift and did some other things. He got on the glass a couple of times. He drove the ball and finished with some athleticism. He obviously was a part of that group in the second half."

Q: Michael Nwoko got his second straight double-double today, but he's gets on the court in spurts. Is that trying to find the right combination for him?

CJ: "I love Mike, and I love his progress, I love his willingness to be coached, and he's getting better. One of the bigger obstacles he's going to have to overcome, and I've told him this – I'm not trying to call him out on this because I love him, but his level of play drops from when he's fresh to when he's tired. It does for everybody."

"Some are in elite shape, some have mental toughness and some have played so much basketball at different levels that they find ways to adjust their body and their mind to not have a big drop-off. Mike hasn't gotten there yet with all those factors, and he knows that. We've talked about it many times. So, we, he and I and the rest of the people that make those decisions, have to figure out how to get him better in those areas. Because usually and even lately when he's on the floor, he's doing some good things."

"It's just that I can see it coming. He gets into what I call his 'basketball car.' He's got a stick shift and an extra gear that's called 'T.' He shifts into his tired gear, and he can't get out of it. In order to get him out of it, I've got to sub him out and get him reenergized that way. That's a running joke amongst me and him about 'the T gear'. I know him well enough that I can see it coming now. So, I'm trying to just get him out of the game before the T gear gets going and his level of play drops."

Guards Claudell Harris Jr. and Shawn Jones Jr.

Q: Claudell, you really helped the offense get going after that difficult start in the first half, what was working for you? How were you able to help rally the troops after things weren't going your way?

CHJ: "I think just letting the ball, and the game come to me. I've got a lot of talented teammates. I see them work hard day in and day out. So, I just trust that they are going to make plays for themselves and plays for me. I'm just focusing on the defensive end, and it just came to me tonight."

Q: Coach Jans probably isn't too happy about giving up 84 points today. What was lacking on the defensive end today?

SJJ: "Energy, I'm not too happy about it right now either because that's not us especially to that kind of team. It's basketball. So, you got to get better next week. We need to play harder defensively next week and practice harder and make sure to bring it."

Q: Shawn, I'm sure this felt a little similar to that Southern game from last year that you guys ended up losing. Today, you were able to figure out a way to get a win. What do you think was different in the way you were able to do it this time compared to last year?

SJJ: "We just stayed together and kept getting each other involved. Trying to do anything we can to help each other get a win and not give up. I feel like last year we gave up, and we thought it was going to be a cakewalk. We came in this year and did the same thing. However, we just had a different mindset going toward the end of the game. Staying together and sticking together and playing our basketball. We're going to figure it out."

Q: Claudell, when both you and Josh Hubbard get going at the same time, how much of a boost does that give the backcourt?

CHJ: "It's hard to stop Josh. He gets a lot of attention on the ball and off the ball. I kind of just feed off that and try to play off that. Hit the open shots, make the right plays, limit my turnovers and it works out."

Q: Shawn, your role on the team is fluid. You start, you come off the bench and you play really good defense, but tonight you scored 11 points. What's your mindset whenever you go on the floor?

SJJ: "Just to be a factor and do something to makes an impact in the game. No matter if I'm scoring, on defense, diving on the floor or even cheering for my teammates [on the bench]. Do something to keep the energy on and keep the vibes good."

Q: Claudell, you had a couple of rough games from the perimeter, but it seems like you've regained your stroke. Have you changed anything, or are you finally finding your stroke again?

CHJ: "The thing is just finding it. I just appreciate my teammates and my coaching staff for keeping that trust in me, even when I was going through that little slump. Coach Jans always preaches to shoot my best shot every time. I just stay conscious of my mechanics, and what I work on in bringing it to the floor."

Q: Shawn, what does it mean to have a guy like Cameron Matthews as a veteran leader?

SJ: "He's a Swiss Army knife. He's always going to make an impact on the game, no matter what. He's the leader of the team. He makes sure we know where we're supposed to be. We listen to him, and we look up to him. We try to take as much advice from him as we can."

Q: Shawn, you played in that Tupelo game last year. Talk about the atmosphere of that game.

SJ: "It's a great atmosphere. It's different to us, but we still have the home crowd advantage. It's just another opportunity to show our fans somewhere else how we play and what Bulldog basketball means and is all about. I can't wait to get out there and show the fans what we're capable of."