

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes
No. 22 Mississippi State vs. No. 19 Ole Miss – February 15, 2025

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: Your team is 4-2 on the road in SEC play. What stood out to you about the team's performance in a tough environment?

CJ: "Just their connectivity, their togetherness. Most coaches around the country talk about that, especially when you're headed into a tough road environment. I thought our kids embodied that today."

"I was very concerned about this game. I thought that Ole Miss was playing a little bit better than we were. They came off of two great road wins, and we have so much respect for Coach Beard and their staff. Their players play the right way. Getting off to a decent start certainly helped. We handled their runs. Our kids just stuck together and found a way to get it done on the road."

Q: Ole Miss only shot 38 percent from the field tonight. Can you talk about how good your defense was tonight?

CJ: "It was better. I don't know how much of it was them or us. Maybe they were just off, I don't know yet. We've been getting a lot of criticism for our three-point defense, and rightfully so. Tonight, it was obviously much better."

Q: We talked earlier in the week about your secondary scorers. How important was it to have guys like Claudell Harris Jr., RJ Melendez, and Riley Kugel contribute tonight?

CJ: "Let's be honest, when we're not shooting the ball or getting much scoring from those three guys, it puts a lot of pressure on everybody else. Can we win without them scoring? Yeah, but it's going to be very difficult. It's much easier for us to win when we have more contributions from more people."

"I'm just happy for them. I'm happy for those three to play to what they're capable of. I don't think any one of them had an, 'Oh my God' game. They all played the way we've expected them to play all year, and we're proud of them."

Q: Early in the second half you had to go smaller due to Michael Nwoko and KeShawn Murphy being in foul trouble. How key was that stretch for that lineup to be able to extend the lead that much going into halftime?

CJ: "It's kind of a dummy deal, right? They forced me to do it, and it worked really well. We played some small lineups against them the first time too. We like it when Cam [Cameron Matthews] is at the five spot sometimes because of his quarterback ability and his IQ running the offense. I thought that was big to be able to survive some foul issues. We had some guys in the first half with two or three, but we were able to get a lead, which was great for momentum coming out of the half."

Q: Did you think your team played with a little more urgency than theirs?

CJ: "Gosh, I don't know about that. They're a very good basketball team. Like I said, being honest, I thought they were playing better than we were heading into this game. It was one of those burn the boats type of games. We talked a lot about how we needed to outplay them. They don't beat themselves. They stay in games and figure out ways to win. We needed to flip the script on them. I'm just super proud of our guys because that was an intense game. They stuck together, and we had multiple guys make big time plays. That allowed us to win in a road game."

Q: You briefly went into a 2-3 zone on defense tonight. Do you feel comfortable running that defense, or was it just what the situation called for?

CJ: "I'm not afraid to play zone. I've played zone a lot, especially as I've gotten older in my career. We haven't played as much this year because, when we have, we haven't been as comfortable. We wanted to throw them a curveball. We really just wanted to disrupt them where we could. They were usually out of an ATO, most people run their best sets that way. When coaches employ that kind of changes the defense, and we did that tonight. It worked out, I think we did it three times. They had a wide-open look one time, but they didn't make it."

Q: You really limited Ole Miss's second chance points tonight. How critical was that to the outcome?

CJ: "We had been counting offensive rebounds all game. We checked at each media timeout where we were at with 50-50 balls and then bodies, which are three stops in a row [on defense]. We didn't get a ton of those, but that was the focus. We talked about how that was the reason we won at our place, the backboards. They were certainly aware of that, and I'm sure talked about it ad nauseum coming into this game. We needed to take their best shot in terms of trying to keep us off the boards. We were just okay in the first half, but our guys kept going. As the game waned, I thought our offensive rebounding really got into the game."

Forward KeShawn Murphy

Q: Tell me the emotions of your team right now after getting a win in Oxford.

KM: "It was us being resilient. That's the name of the game. We came out with the aggressiveness, and it was just us being resilient. We knew what we were getting ourselves into with away games and a rivalry. It was us just being together, and that's the name of the game. Coach Jans told us that before we went out, and we executed at a high level."

Q: It feels like resilience has been a trait for your team since Coach Jans arrived. What makes your team so tough?

KM: "[Coach] Jans will never change. So, you know he's going to preach how he wants his style of basketball, and we're going to adjust regardless. It's just us accepting that and about everyone playing that role."

Q: In your eyes, what changed at the end of the first half to take control with a 13-2 run?

KM: "Nothing, we just stayed solid. Maybe, we picked up our intensity on defense. Maybe, that was the name of the game, I'd say defense. We've been preaching that a lot going into this game. So, I'd say defense wins games."

Q: Some Ole Miss players mentioned this in their press conference, but did it seem like you guys wanted it more tonight?

KM: "Yes sir, that's how we should play every game. We talk to each other personally. We need to come out and be more aggressive every game. Not just games that we want to, but it should be every game. It got us a 10-point win."

Q: You guys have another big game Tuesday against another top 10 team in Texas A&M at the Hump. How do you kind of forget about this one to prepare for the next one?

KM: "Yeah, and he [Coach Jans] preaches that a lot. We know every next game is a gauntlet. So, we're going to prep the same way, be as head-high with this game and be more aggressive next game."

Forward RJ Melendez

Q: What's the immediate reaction to getting this big win on the road?

RJM: "We definitely needed this win. Coming off a little stretch of a couple games that we've been coming to the wire and let ourselves go. This time we've just been working on staying together, being a family, being as a team, picking everybody up, and whenever things get hard, keep going. Keep chipping away and staying together the whole time. I think that's just been the main thing."

Q: What is it about Coach Jans that makes it seem like every roster is tough?

RJM: "I think he just mentally pushes us every day to our limits. He does a great job on being able to coach us and at the same time pushes us. I think that's made us mentally strong enough for whenever these moments in big games come. The crowds could be loud, but he's on us every single day so that's kind of normal for us. We just kind of block out the crowd and focus on us. He just says that every time, don't worry about the distractions."

Q: Did it feel like you guys just wanted this one more tonight?

RJM: "Yeah, we definitely talked about it. We said we've got to be the most aggressive team, and we've got to be the first one to punch. We can't just go out on an away game and expect to have a great game. We've got to go out, have the first punch, play aggressive and play tougher than them. I feel like that's what we did. We've always got to be ten points better on the road, and I feel like that's the job that we did."

Q: Does it feel like you guys are reinvigorated a little bit as we go into another big week?

RJ: "Absolutely, just coming off a couple losses and then getting this road win is huge, It's a rivalry too. We went 2-0 in this rivalry. So, it just gives us confidence and helps us keep going in the win column."