

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes
No. 21 Mississippi State vs. No. 7 Texas A&M – February 18, 2025

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: *How different was your team's intensity in the second half compared to the Florida game?*

CJ: "Obviously, you guys know they [the players] don't listen to me that often, but it was the last thing we talked about before we went out. I don't want anyone in the locker room talking about what we should have done, and I want you to leave everything you've got on the court. We've been in these situations. We've got to come out of the gate and play even harder, because they're going to. My big theme with them the last minute before we left to go get warmed up was, I don't want that locker room to be like that, where we are talking about what we should have done next time. Like you said, they had a great intensity. It started on the defensive end. Certainly, when you start making shots, it builds everyone's confidence."

Q: *Coach, this is the second game now that Claudell Harris Jr. has come off the bench and all the sudden you've provided a spark in the second half with his three-point shooting. What did you see from him, and did he look like he had a little pep in his step?*

CJ: "Yeah, again you know me, I don't like to talk for them [the players]. But, first of all, he handled it well with nothing. He was like, 'Whatever we've got to do, Coach.' You know, he's about winning. We just felt that it was time to just tweak it a bit and change up some of the guys that were playing together more minutes because of how you start and how you sub."

"He works so hard, and he's such a good guy. He's as energized as we have in terms of shootarounds, in terms of stuff they're not excited about doing, walkthrough stuff or half speed stuff. He's always leading the charge in terms of his energy, his talk and his focus. Our staff appreciates him so much. You root for all your guys, but when you get a one-year guy and he's totally in the culture the way he has, you want him to do well. He's had some frustrating performances because he's known as a scorer-slash-shooter. He went through some games where he wasn't shooting at the level that he used to, but he stuck with it. This is a great example of who he is on our team."

"One of the first opportunities he had to shoot the ball in the first half, he turned it down. As he was coming back on defense the next time, it was a dead ball, I heard him say it and I looked and there were three guys, one's standing up barking at him to shoot the darn basketball. I'm like, 'Okay, shoot it Claudell. Keep shooting the ball'. I joined the party, but that tells you a lot – the respect he has from his teammates that early in the game for them to encourage him to not turn down shots."

Q: *What did you do with your guys to keep setting the tone and keep playing the way you wanted to play?*

CJ: "Well, like you said, Texas A&M is really good at dragging you into the ring. They're a physical basketball team. They're number one in the country in offensive rebounds. They're number one in the SEC in offensive rebounding. They're number one in defensive rebounding, and they're number one in an unbelievably athletic league in forcing turnovers."

"We obviously knew exactly how they were going to play, and you don't have a choice at times. We talked a lot about that, and we were going to have to get in the trenches. In the second half, we talked about the trenches going deeper. We've got to keep diving in there because that's the way they're going to pull us down. You've got to expect it at times, and you've got to do your best to match what they're doing, certainly trying to exceed it."

"They won the rebounding battle, and to be honest with you, deep down I didn't know if we could win the rebounding battle. I was just hoping to neutralize it because of what they do, that's what they do. I thought in the second half, especially, we won the turnover battle. To me, that was the story of the game, how many times we turned them over and how many times we turned defensive into offense. Certainly, when you start making three's, that's the separation in the game."

Q: It was the kind of night where y'all brought some grit between forcing turnovers and playing great defense in the second half. What'd you think of your team on that side?

CJ: "I thought three games in a row we've done that – at Georgia, at Ole Miss and certainly tonight. When we were in the locker room, celebrating with the music going, I heard Shawn Jones say it two or three times, 'That's Bulldog Basketball.' I heard him say it, just kind of to whomever. When I got a chance when they quieted down, I said, 'Shawn, tell them what you said,' and he said it. I told him that's right. That's who we are, you all knew that before you got here that needs to be part of our DNA. It's been part of our DNA sometimes, but it hasn't been on a consistent basis for us. Hopefully, now that it's had some success. They've seen how it can work for this particular team, we will have complete buy-in."

Guard Claudell Harris and Forward Cameron Matthews

Q: How different was the mentality coming into the second half?

CHJ: "Starting the second half, we knew we had to come out with more intensity than we did in the first half. We've been having trouble coming out in the second half in slumps, coming out a little flat. We made it an emphasis to really get into the ball, to really apply a lot of pressure onto the other team and to just making it hard for them."

Q: What was that moment like for you (hitting the three's in second half), and what do you think it meant for this team?

CHJ: "It was a big moment for me. I haven't been hitting shots to the capability that I know I can, and my coaches and teammates know I can. So, for them to just keep finding me an open spot, trusting me and keep putting me in positions to get shots it's a blessing."

Q: What were some of the keys to keeping them tied up on the defensive end?

CM: "I feel like that's just Bulldog Basketball. That's how we've been playing these last two years when Jans first got here. I feel like that's what we've been missing. That's what we've been lacking the past few games. I feel like this game we just got back to what we're used to doing."

Q: What is it like coming off the bench the past two games?

CHJ: "I'm a team guy. I'm just trying to win. Like he said, it's Bulldog Basketball. So, however we try to win, I'm willing to do it. I feel like perspective is everything. You just have to make the most of every opportunity you get in order to help your teammates win."

Q: How big was getting that confidence in the win over Ole Miss?

CM: "I feel like that game at Ole Miss really sparked that momentum. Us as a team, we got together and had a deep talk. We just talked about how everybody needs to play to their best, and we just need to keep stacking games in."

Q: How'd you get them [Texas A&M] to play the kind of game you wanted them to play?

CM: "I feel like whenever we're playing Bulldog Basketball, we're just imposing our will on the other team. I just feel like we keep guarding the ball, keep guarding the point of impact and everything else takes care of itself."

Q: How does it feel to get a couple big wins here?

CHJ: "I'm happy we're starting to play our best basketball. We aren't there yet, but it's a good sign that we're making it uphill climbs going into March Madness. We just have to keep building on this momentum going forward."

Texas A&M Head Coach Buzz Williams

Q: What did you see from your team offensively in the second half, and what did Mississippi State's defense do to stop you?

BW: "Yeah, they were great. They were great on both sides of the ball. I thought their defense for sure helped their offense. Similar to your question, I thought our offense really hurt our defense. We turned the ball over 28 percent of the time when we had it. That's a credit to Coach Jans, their staff and their players. They were tremendous. We're playing on a broken floor. They're scoring layups, they're scoring threes in transition and we're fouling in transition. It's just mathematically hard to overcome, and that's a credit to their plan and a credit to their execution."

Q: Coach, even with that, you were able to cut it down to four points a couple times in that second half, what did you think got you all to that point? Why do you feel your team couldn't capitalize on it?

BW: "Well, I thought the first half was probably more like what everybody probably anticipated, more of a rock fight. If you're outscored 17 points in the second half, there's probably some outlier stats. I think ours would be turnovers. There are different types of turnovers, but a lot of our turnovers in the second half were live-ball turnovers."

"I think in the scoring runs that you would mention in the second half, we didn't turn it over. That would be a portion of it. Then, there were times where we didn't turn it over. Occasionally, we would score but then on the other end, we wouldn't get a stop. We were okay rebounding the ball when they missed, but we didn't get our defense set. The pace was way too fast. They're playing faster than I think Coach [Jans] has played since he's been here. And, rightfully so, they're doing an unbelievable job. We accentuated that pace by kicking the ball all over the gym. Again, that's a credit to their plan, and the execution of their plan."

Q: Did you think Mississippi State's defense treated Wade Taylor IV any differently in the second half compared to the first?

BW: "I don't know if I would necessarily say different in regard to how Coach [Jans] has played four [Taylor IV] in the past. I do think he commands attention similar like the attention that 12 [Josh Hubbard] commands for them. You have to make decisions on how you're going to handle ball screens with 12 [Hubbard], how you're going to handle ball screens with 4 [Taylor IV] for us. Then, how you're going to play him when he's on the weak side. I don't necessarily, and I haven't watched it [the film] obviously, but I would say how they defended 4 [Taylor IV] was what I expected."