

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes No. 21 Mississippi State at Oklahoma – February 22, 2024

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: How big were Oklahoma's Jeremiah Fears and Sam Godwin in affecting the outcome today?

CJ: "There were a lot of factors that decided the outcome of the game. I think number one on the list was the fact that we gave up 59 points in the second half. We can sit here and talk about rebounding, turnovers, this that and the other, their willingness to try and fight back and have a chance to win the game."

"But, at the end of the day, I don't know if that's ever happened to us. I don't remember it, and I'm not saying it hasn't. We couldn't guard them in the second half. We switched coverages multiple times to try and screw them up, but they did a good job of attacking us. They had a plan. We tried to disrupt that plan and do different coverages, but unfortunately that didn't work out. That's the bottom line, and that's the story."

Q: How was Jeremiah Fears able to keep finding open players?

CJ: "He was terrific, he really good. I don't know. Certainly, we were well aware of what his strengths are as an individual. We had plenty of time to get it into our kids' heads. It's really easy to sit here and say, 'Don't let him go left.' But he's got great size, he's got great length and he's got great ball skills."

"He felt good early. Usually, he's not a big assist guy. That was one of the things that impressed me the most, he didn't do it for just himself. He got 27 points on 12 shots, that's highly efficient. He had 10 assists and three turnovers. So, he had a great game. We have to tip our cap to him."

Q: Did Sam Godwin do anything that you didn't expect him to this afternoon?

CJ: "I'm going to be honest. When you watch him or prepare for him, from the middle of the SEC logo to just below the charge circle, he missed so many shots in that area. But they were all good misses. They're soft, and you saw that he's got a nice touch. He's very capable of playing in the short roll and driving the basketball from the middle third of the paint."

"Today, they went in for him. We certainly had something to do with that. I was nervous about him, and I told my staff that his percentages aren't that great. This, that and the other. He an elite offensive rebounder especially for them, but those shots that he missed that hung around the rim would fall off. Today, they went in for him."

Q: It seemed like we didn't have the edge in this game that Oklahoma did. Would you agree?

CJ: "You're exactly right, and I felt the same way. At the end of the day, it's always on me and my staff to get them ready to play. I thought we had a great plan in terms of when we left, when we arrived, what we did last night, what we did this morning and how we practiced this week. We had the shortest practice of the year on Friday. It was less than 60 minutes, and we didn't have much physical contact during that practice. This is the time of the year that you want them to feel mentally and physically really good. Our injury report is pretty clean. From what I've been told by the guys who work on them with that stuff, they all felt really good."

"Our vibe in the locker room was good. I was told our warmup was good, but I agree. I don't know why. Obviously, it wasn't a great environment. We knew it wasn't going to be a good environment. We talked plenty about it that it wasn't going to be a good environment, and how we have to take

advantage of it. We could hear each other talk on defense. If we did well enough and got the game in our favor, we had enough fans here that they would be able to hear them in that way.”

“But you’re right. We should’ve been in better control of the game in the first half. We just could never really get it going. I know we were up three, but I was in the same boat as you thinking that I felt like we should probably be up by more like 10.”

“Unfortunately, we came out of the gates. I didn’t know this unfortunately, and people may criticize me for saying this. We got scored on in 11 straight possessions to start the second half, which I’m not happy with. Some of our staff members let me know that. I don’t look at it that way. I don’t count it in my head, but I knew it was going the wrong direction. That’s obviously not the way to start the second half.”

Q: You haven’t been to many places where the crowd hasn’t been all over you. Do you have to create your own atmosphere in a place like this when you don’t have as many people all over you and breathing down your neck?

CJ: “Sure, absolutely, it happens all the time. Sometimes, that happens at home especially in the fall when you’re not playing a name opponent. The vibes not just what you want them to be, but it’s just a part of college basketball.”

“One of the things I always tell our guys is that I don’t care where the game is played or what kind of building it is. As long as the court is regulation and the rim are what they need to be, it doesn’t matter. If you’re motivated by that, you’re not going to be elite. You’re not going to be great. I thought maybe we were on our way to being a great team and having this momentum. We definitely took a step backwards today.”