

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes No. 22 Mississippi State at Georgia – February 8, 2025

Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: What made the difference down the stretch in this game?

CJ: “It was quite the game. We survived a lot. We survived a 6-of-18 from the free throw line. We survived Asa Newell, who is a heck of a player, I don’t know if he’s made more than one three all year. He went 3-for-4. Blue Cain banks one in, those can really deflate you to where you say, “Really?” Certainly, late game, we had a little trouble there. We threw the ball away when all we needed to do was hit a few free throws and take it to the house.”

“I’m just proud of them. It’s been a long week, as you can imagine. Georgia is a really good basketball team. They’ve only lost one game at home all year [entering tonight], and that was to Auburn, who was ranked number one in the country. We knew it was going to be a physical battle, and it sure was. So, I’m just excited for these guys to get that winning feeling again, and we’re ready to go home.”

Q: You whipped Georgia in the paint today. Was that the plan, to go inside and beat them at their own game?

CJ: I don’t know if that was the plan to beat them at their own game. We certainly talked and nosism talked about their size, their strength and their physicality around the basket. Maybe some of our guys took offense to it after a while and got tired of hearing me talk about it.”

“Getting paint touches for our team was a huge goal coming into this game. We wanted to get a ton of paint touches. We had 24 at halftime. I don’t know what we ended with, but that’s a good number for us for a half. We didn’t want to settle. We wanted to get it in there. We thought we could get it to the line a little bit more, and that didn’t work out. They were men out there tonight. I don’t know how it looks on TV, but from where I stand, there were a lot of scrums. It felt like some rugby was going on in the paint at different times in the game.”

Q: How big was Michael Nwoko early in this one?

CJ: “First of all, I grabbed him in the locker room and told him, ‘You set the tone for this game, you really did.’ I told the whole team that, too. The way Mike started this game, he set the tone. It gave us confidence, and it ran through our bench. It’s a feel good on the road to get off to a good start and keep the crowd at bay. I thought, for the most part, they did keep the crowd at bay. The one time it got really loud was when they ran the play out of the timeout and executed it by laying the ball in. I thought Mike had a tremendous approach for the start of the basketball game. So, that really helped us.”

Q: You had a great game on offense, what was working for you on the offensive end?

CJ: “We were really trying to do what we could against their ice ball screen coverage. We put some new things in to put our guys in the best position and isolate some people. We had some good possessions that really worked.”

“We tried to push the ball more [in transition]. We got a little tired late and didn’t push it as much as we did early, but we were trying to push it. Obviously, Josh Hubbard took that advice and did it at least twice, maybe three times. He just got the outlet, and he was going. It was like a 100-yard dash. He would lap the field. Those are stolen baskets which are huge in a one-possession game.”

Q: We talked earlier about some guys who needed a big game tonight, what did you see from some of them?

CJ: "I thought we had a lot of guys that did some really great things, I really did. I talked about it in the locker room. Riley [Kugel] gave us a scoring punch. Claudell [Harris Jr.] hit a big three when we really needed one, and he drove the ball that one time. I thought Shawn Jones [Jr.] gave us a big boost when we were struggling on offense. He made a shot, and he got to the rack as well."

"One thing we're disappointed in more than anything is the free throws. We've been a much better free throw shooting team than that. It really felt like this is how we used to win. Bad from the line and from three, but really scrappy and figuring out a way to win. It felt like that. I'm not saying that's what we're trying to go back to, but you have to win in any fashion or form. That's all that matters is how you win. That game turned into an old-school rock fight. And, fortunately, we came out on top."

Q: Your mental fortitude was displayed here when things didn't bounce your way. What did you see from your team?

CJ: "It was good. Again, it was a long week. As you can imagine, our practices like I told the media were what I wanted them to be. The response was really good. Their togetherness was good, and it showed in this game. We all understood how important this game was. We needed to get back on the left side of the column. It was whatever it took to win, and that's what they did."

Forward Cameron Matthews

Q: Chris Jans told everybody that this last week was about the team trying to get its mental right. You had to show some mental toughness late today. How much did that come into play today?

CM: "Oh yeah, it meant a lot. We had a rough week after that bad performance on Saturday. We just had to work all week. [Coach] Jans was on us real bad. But, you know, we got a good group. I trust these guys with my life. I had no doubt we were going to come out here and get a win."

Q: How great was it to see four guys give you a big lift on the offensive end?

CM: "Oh yeah, that's nothing new though. That meant a lot, but that's nothing new. That's the same thing we've been working on all year. We're about nine or 10 guys deep. We work hard every day, and we get after each other every day. So, we knew what we had to do."

Q: You guys were able to get the ball into the paint a lot. Was that a big part of the plan going into today?

CM: "That's the gameplan every game. We track paint touches, things like that. We're best when we get in the paint, whether that's layups or kickout three's. That's what we track right there."

Q: Tell me about KeShawn Murphy the last seven games and how he's grown to become a valuable scorer for this team.

CM: "Oh yeah, my dawg, KeShawn. As you all might know, he's been through a lot, but I'm super proud of him. He's been working every year whether that's him getting major minutes or not. He's coming in the gym every day. He works hard, and I'm super proud of him."

Q: This is State's third SEC road win this year in a league where it's as good as maybe it's ever been. How tough is it to do what you guys just did here today?

CM: "Oh yeah, it's always tough. Especially when we got a league like this with 13 or 14 teams that could get in the tournament. It's really tough every night."