

**2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**  
**No. 14 Mississippi State vs. No. 6 Kentucky– January 11, 2024**

**Mississippi Head Coach Chris Jans**

***Q: From your vantage point, how did Kentucky get open looks from three-point range tonight?***

**CJ:** “They’re very explosive offensively. One thing they do particularly well is make three’s. They’ve got multiple weapons. Certainly, we had some breakdowns. I thought the biggest difference was how Jaxson Robinson was able to get it going. It was almost like he knew that every shot he took was going to go in. I think their MVP was 15 [Ansley] Almonor. He made some timely three’s when they really needed it. Our three-point shooting defense has been an issue, one that I thought we fixed in the last few games, but it bit us tonight.”

***Q: Your depth was tested tonight as Riley Kugel was injured, and Josh Hubbard found himself in foul trouble. How do you think all of your guys stepped up to keep this game close?***

**CJ:** “It happens in basketball games. We definitely had some issues to work through. Riley got hurt early with the fall, but I heard that he was going to give it a go after halftime. He looked good and made that three in the corner with his fingers taped up. All the people that have been watching us know that he gets in a mood and gets it going. Then, he had some kind of ankle injury that I wasn’t even updated about. So, he was out for the rest of the night.”

Then, Josh getting into foul trouble is always a problem. Fortunately, it doesn’t happen often, but this time it did. The biggest thing was Cam Matthews, I’m just disappointed. He just emptied his tank, which he always does, but it was different tonight. I just wish that performance could’ve been in a winning effort.”

***Q: Are you all right with your team’s and Josh Hubbard’s shot selection?***

**CJ:** “Shot selection is very fluid. I’ve got unbelievable confidence in Josh, and I’m sure the rest of our team does, too. He’s proved over the last year and a half that he’s a prolific scorer, and that he can shoot it. He shoots shots that sometimes might not be a great shot for someone else, but it is for him.”

“There were multiple guys that took shots in the first half that I didn’t think were appropriate at the time. We felt like if we shared it and attacked the paint, our offense would be fine. He was one of those guys that took shots in the first half that I thought could’ve gotten a better one.”

***Q: What does it say about your team that they were able to combat every Kentucky run with one of their own?***

**CJ:** “It was a pretty exciting game for the fans with a lot of runs. Runs are obviously a big part of any game. I never dreamt that we wouldn’t show some resiliency and show some effort. We didn’t lead for very long. They had the lead for the majority of it, but I thought we played very well. Hats off to their staff and their team. They competed at a high level and did what they had to do to get a road win.”

***Q: What’s it going to take to win close games like these in the future?***

**CJ:** “We’ve got to make sure that we understand that every shot is crucial. I have a lot of confidence in this group. I really believe in them, and I think they believe in each other. They’ll rally after this loss. We’ve got to understand that everything matters. You can’t say ‘I’ll get it back’ because you won’t. There are going to be a lot of challenging games and opportunities. So, we just have to play our best.”

***Q: Whenever you have players who can be emotional after a big loss, what is your message after a game like that?***

**CJ:** "We just have to take every positive that we can out of this. I was proud of our toughness and resilience. I've been telling them for a while that we've got what we need in this room for a great season. There are a lot of other teams that feel the same way in this league. We just have to stick to our style. We've got awesome kids that have been working their tails off. They'll bounce back."

***Q: Atmosphere wise, was this the craziest you've seen the Hump since you've been here?***

**CJ:** "It was great. When I drove up, I'd never seen lines that long an hour and a half before the game. That was the thing that stuck out the most to me. I certainly appreciate the folks for creating this kind of environment and hope that that will continue from here on."

**Guard Josh Hubbard and Forward Cameron Matthews**

***Q: Particularly in the backcourt and I know some were tough shots, what were they doing with their screens so much and getting good looks from three?***

**JH:** "They did an incredible job knocking down some shots. I feel like we had a good game plan. Some possessions, we didn't execute to the highest level. But besides that, they were just hitting some tough shots."

***Q: Cam, it was a well-played and close game up until the two-minute mark, what kind of just happened there at the end of the game?***

**CM:** "Towards the end, we weren't getting the looks that we wanted. We just weren't balling. Kentucky is a really good basketball team, and they just made a few more shots than us today."

***Q: Cam, you definitely seemed to have a handle on the ball this game. Six steals and you were able to translate that into the offensive end. What were you noticing from them, and how were you able to take advantage of some of the things they were doing?***

**CM:** "I was just in the right spot at the right time. I just capitalized on the few mistakes they made."

***Q: Obviously, a disappointing loss, but The Hump was rocking tonight. You also have a sold-out crowd for next week against Ole Miss, what does playing in these type of environments mean to you all?***

**JH:** "It means a lot. We know we have a lot of support, and we know the fans love our team. They just did an unbelievable job. I'm glad they came, even in this weather, so shoutout to them. I hope we can give them a better performance next week."

***Q: What did it take to be able to respond to Kentucky? Pretty much every time they were able to get a lead, you guys closed it. What did it take to do that almost every time?***

**CM:** "I feel like that just shows how tough this league is. There are a lot of good teams in this league. They're one of them, and we're one of them. It was a dog fight today, and they just made a few more plays than us."

***Q: Josh, this league is going to be like this all year long. How quickly do you have to put this behind you so that you can move on to what's next?***

**JH:** "You've just got to take what you can from it and learn from it. Take the mistakes we made and just move on. That's the best thing that we can do heading into next week."

***Q: Josh, last season, a lot of the scoring came from you. This season, do you feel any pressure to score a lot of points and put up a lot of shots each night?***

**JH:** "Not really, I feel like we have so many hard practices to where we are dependent on everybody. Everybody is talented on this team, and we can do a lot of things. I just think that we are so special on both ends, and we have to use that to the best of our ability."

***Q: Josh, you did a good job of grabbing the ball, but you picked up four fouls midway through the second half. How do you keep your composure in times like those?***

**JH:** "My teammates and coaching staff helped me stay positive. It was obviously frustrating for some of those calls, but you can't let the refs affect you. You also can't let that be an excuse. So, we just have to the next play."

**Kentucky Head Coach Mark Pope**

***Q: How does it feel getting 200 wins at a game like this?***

**MP:** "That's a great win, and it's like the 100th thing down the list. I'm just so happy for our guys. It's our first road win. The only opportunity we had to win on the road are against ranked teams. So, it's hard. This is a great venue. I waked in here I don't know if this is the same building, but it feels exactly like the same building I played in."

"I know Coach Jans. I've had a chance to coach against him a lot. He's a great coach, and his team is a great team that's played some unbelievable basketball. For our guys to come in here and just fight, fight, fight. We really answered some specific things that we've been struggling with. I'm really proud of our guys and really happy for our guys. They're really happy. What an unbelievable night of basketball, it's pretty special"

***Q: What does it feel like to see that breakthrough for a player like Jaxson Robinson in this environment and the first SEC road win?***

**MP:** "Jax, my goodness, it's the best part of coaching actually. Just seeing guys grow and do things that they didn't know they could do in times where they didn't know if they could do it. When you get to be a part of that, it's really special."

"Jax is unbelievable. He's had a really tough week. He had a lot of frustration and a lot of things that he was concerned about and a lot of stress in his life. From basketball, off the court, everywhere. He came to me this morning. We talked a couple of days ago, and he's been unbelievable in practice the last few days. His voice, his energy, his juice and his freshness. He told me this morning 'I've been worried about making shots and missing shots. I'm worried about my future, and I'm worried about all the things. I know I just want to go compete and go play and let all that stuff take care of itself.' When you get a guy, a young guy, who can get himself to that place, and you see performances like tonight. I'm telling you, it's thrilling to watch."

"I'm so happy for him. He's done this before, but he hasn't done it on this big of stage. He hasn't done it in this league, this way, against a ranked team on the road. But he's done it now."

***Q: Is that the best you've seen him play?***

**MP:** "I've seen him play some great basketball, but I would put it this way, you see the kids play great as eighth graders. You see him play great as a senior in high school. You see him play great in all the places. Then, you see him like he's a pinnacle, and he's wearing a Kentucky jersey. When he came to do that in Kentucky jersey in the toughest league in America against a top 15 team. They're ranked 25th defensive. I put them as a top 10 defensive team. With some current frustration and carrying frustration into it, I've never seen him do all that before. It's pretty awesome."

***Q: How do you keep that confidence rolling and want to ride the waves and not call a time out?***

**MP:** "It's so interesting because you always want to have one [time out] in your pocket, at least for late. I've been there sometimes, you're just like 'ah', and I've got a lot of faith in our guys that we could figure it out."

"But we're balancing a lot. Amari [Williams] played massive minutes in the second half, and he had a huge assignment. So, we ended up buying him a minute just with substitution, which could have gone either way. And Lamont Butler is just giving everything he's got out there. We're kind of dense with that. But when you have guys like we do that are as tough as we are. These are tough kids, man. They're tough, and they're tough because they'll fight physically. But they're tough because they fight so hard to be dialed in on what's happening, and they're getting better and better. They're understanding more and more, and it's a tough group. No one else has done that this year. No one else has come in here [to Mississippi State] and won. It takes a tough group to do it. That's what we got, We got a tough group."

***Q: How crazy was that sequence and just see him [Ansley Almonor] fire and fire and fire and laugh off?***

**MP:** "This Ansley Almonor is really special because he came here understanding what he was walking into. He came here understanding that Andrew Carr was sitting there, and the roster was almost done. He's like, I'm coming in, where I want to come and I want to find a way to win games. You probably remember me saying this. I've said this so many times. I'm telling you, Ansley Almonor is a perfect fit for how we play, and he's going to win us some games."

"I love when players make coaches look really smart because we're not. Sometimes, they make us look smart, and Ansley did that. What a brilliant performance from him. I'm telling you, that's why you come to Kentucky because you can't find, I don't care if you're a 100 times over billionaire, you can never, ever buy what Ansley Almonor just did and what he just experienced. Never. There's no money. There's nothing that can buy it. It's just the blood, sweat equity and the courage to actually come here and then step up and do it. There's only one way to get it, and it's to do everything he's done to get here. It's just like, I'm so happy for him. It was fun, man. That was super fun. I know BBN [Big Blue Nation] was going crazy."

***Q: For Andrew Carr to gut it out the way that he did and step up and hit big shots and ones, what kind of difference did he make?***

**MP:** "Andrew Carr, wow, we talked a lot the last couple of days. He hasn't practiced yet, and he hasn't done anything. A ton of credit to Brandon Wells and Randy Towner, our performance team, for even making it possible that he could play. We sat down and had a long talk yesterday. He's feeling so much stress because he's like, 'I don't want to be out there if I'm not helping the team, but I want to help the team so bad.' Then, you look at him. It's the second straight game where he can't sit down during timeouts. He made it through his shootaround today. So, we came and said, 'Let's go through warmups before the game and just see.' Then, he got through warmups. He's like, 'I think I'm okay to try.' Every rotation, I'm making an eye contact with Brandon Wells. I'm like, 'What are you thinking? Can we do more? Do we need to shut it down? Where are we?' And Andrew ended up making huge plays, man. Huge plays, not just because he got a couple of and-1s, but because he got some guys in foul trouble that really helped us. He's a tough kid, man. He's a warrior. He's a really tough kid, he loves our team."

**Q: What was the change of momentum after Josh Hubbard got four fouls? Then, he comes back in, but he doesn't make those Josh Hubbard type shots, do you breathe a sigh of relief there?**

**MP:** "Well, he made a whole bunch of them [shots]. It's not like he didn't make a lot of them. He's a really special player. They have some really special players. I'm telling you, this is Cameron Matthews is a special player, too. I never really know the dynamics in the other team's locker room, but I would guess their guys love playing with him, too. But it's a terrific team. This Mississippi State team is really good. They guard different, and they make it really hard. What a fun battle this was tonight."

**Q: Your team is 3-0 in bounce back games after a loss. What is that identity for your team to be able to respond to a loss the way they have been?**

**MP:** "It's our guys. They care, our guys care ... I wish everybody could get to know these kids. Amari Williams is an incredibly special young man. He's got a heart that is probably three times the size of a normal human's heart. He loves our guys, and he loves this team. You feel it, he's got this protective thing where he wants to take care of our guys. He wants to fight for our guys. He did the pregame speech today. It was only two sentences. The first was 'I just hope you guys know how much I love you.' You could feel it in the locker room man. I got emotional because I know how much he loves us, and I know how much we love him. When you have a team that's put together that way – that wears Kentucky across their chest. These guys are going to come fight for you. We're not going to be perfect. We're going to have hard times, for sure. But these guys want to represent Kentucky. They want it so bad. They want to take care of each other so badly. It makes it fun to coach, man"

**Guard Jaxson Robinson and Center Amari Williams**

**Q: What does it feel like to get that confidence up and go through the best version of you?**

**JR:** "I can't thank these guys enough, my coaches, especially after last game. It was tough for me, but I knew I just had to move on. Coach talked about just moving on to the next game. Confidence is where it is. I put in the work the whole summer and into the season. So, tonight, I was able to show it."

**Q: What goes through your mind when you feel yourself heating up?**

**JR:** "My teammates help open shots for me. I felt good so that was really all."

**Q: Amari, what went through your head as you watched him [Jaxson Robinson]?**

**AW:** "Like you said, finding the ball. He had a great game. The second half, everything was going for him. So you know, I was helping him get shots."

**Q: How proud of him are you?**

**AW:** "As a team, we all know Jax. We all know how hard he works. Just making sure that he knows that. Seeing him today made us all proud. Just knowing that he was back was big for us."

**Q: What was the pregame speech like?**

**AW:** "It was basically to tell the guys I loved them, really. They're my brothers. Ever since I've been there, they've always been in my corner, all the trips we've been on. A lot of people tried to say we were soft the past few games. So, just coming into this game trying to change that."