

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes
No. 15 Mississippi State at No. 1 Auburn – January 14, 2024

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: How tough was it to gameplan for an Auburn team with so many explosive options?

CJ: “They were as good as advertised. The thing that jumped off the page was their size all over the court. They don’t play many guys that aren’t 6-4 other than the freshman [Tahaad] Pettiford. Obviously, he’s a very talented player, and I’ve never seen him play like that in person. We’re pretty familiar with their team, and they’ve been playing very well. They didn’t have [Johni] Broome. They had plenty of guys step up and rally to pick it up.”

Q: Were your offensive struggles in the first half caused by Auburn’s defensive strategy?

CJ: “I don’t think so. We got to where we had to get in the paint to try and move the defense. It’s counter-productive when they’re so big and physical at the rim. They blocked nine of our shots in the first half. I don’t know if that’s ever happened, I mean, they only blocked two in the second half.”

“It’s also a difference in how it was officiated differently in both halves. They gave us fits in the first half; it wasn’t just one of our guys. Hindsight is 20-20, we just didn’t move the ball well enough to counteract their size.”

Q: Do you normally teach jump stops at the rim?

CJ: “We do. It’s different now, not being able to take charges. You can go in there and know that there isn’t going to be a secondary defender trying to take a charge. When they don’t have as much size, you can get away with that. Today especially, you have guys with the euro-step and travels being more lightly called, you’ve got more freedom.”

“Tonight, it was very apparent from the jump that that wasn’t going to work with their size at the rim. We talked about it at halftime that we’ve got to get an advantage and get them in the air. We did that more in the second half.”

Q: Freshman Dellquan Warren got more playing time than normal tonight, was that by design or just the way the game went?

CJ: “Obviously, Riley Kugel wasn’t in uniform on our bench. He’s been playing a lot of minutes at point guard. We don’t really have many guys to run that spot. We can play it with Claudell [Harris Jr.] a little bit, and Mook [Cameron Matthews] obviously has as well. Coming into the game, Riley gave us the word that he wasn’t going to be ready to go. I knew right then that Delly [Dellquan Warren] was going to play more. He looked a little shaky in the first half, but I think he looked a lot more comfortable from there on.”

Q: On a night that was rough for a lot of guys, RJ Melendez did all that he could to get back in the game tonight. Where does he keep getting better?

CJ: “I love RJ. You’re right in your assessment that he played with his hair on fire in the second half. He was still playing as if the game was close. I didn’t feel like he did that in the first half, for whatever reason. In one of the first possessions, he guarded number 10 [Chad Baker-Mazara], and he’s good, but not that good. RJ didn’t get into him defensively. So, I was pretty disappointed in that. He took it to heart and made the change. He was a big reason that we got it down to 13 [points]. At that point, you’re like, ‘Who knows?’ but then [Denver] Jones hit those free throws, and that was it.”

Q: You said you have confidence in your guys to be resilient, but how important is it for your guys to stay confident after two losses to compete in your next game?

CJ: “We’ll find out how resilient we are. This is the first two-game skid that this team has had. We talked about it after the game that the majority of teams in this league will go through tough stretches. It comes down to maturing and growing. But most importantly, it comes down to staying connected and believing in each other. We have to believe in each other and in our style of play because there are going to be some teams that don’t. Those teams will struggle. That’s going to be a big deal for us, doing all those things. We know what we have ahead of us on Saturday. In my experience in coaching teams, by Thursday practice and gameday on Saturday, this will be the furthest thing from our minds.”