

**2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**  
**No. 14 Mississippi State at South Carolina – January 25, 2024**

**Head Coach Chris Jans**

***Q: How did your guys find a way to get over the hump in this game?***

**CJ:** “I don’t know, I’m really not sure. I’ll have to watch the film because there was a lot going on. Our team doesn’t have that many press OB’s [out of bounds] and sideline plays; you just have to make those up on the fly. There were so many of them. So, we had to keep possession of the ball and relieve some pressure.”

“The end of the game took forever for everybody. It couldn’t get over quickly enough for us. Everyone says it, it’s difficult to win on the road. I don’t care what their record was, it doesn’t matter. These athletes and these coaches, it means so much to them. We talked about it heading in, it’s going to be hard. It got hard, and we figured out a way to win. You just have to find a way. It wasn’t pretty basketball. People who like the aesthetically pleasing game, this wasn’t for them. It was hard on the eyes for both teams.”

***Q: They were switching on Josh Hubbard on the ball screen and we used that to create mismatches. Was that something that you saw early in the game?***

**CJ:** “Yeah, but then Murph [KeShawn Murphy] picked up his second foul. So, that got taken away. They were really aggressive with Josh [Hubbard] on the ball screen. So, we started dashing out of it. We got Michael [Nwoko] on a couple of rolls, got Murph on a couple of rolls and he had the short rolls. So, he was able to facilitate in that way. I thought the guys did a pretty good job adjusting to their ball screens.”

***Q: How did their defensive switch to zone mess our offense up?***

**CJ:** “We prepared for it. They used that in their arsenal a lot more last year. They’ve used it in less than a handful of possessions this year. I think they felt like, at that point in the game, with the lead the way it was, why not? We didn’t do great, obviously, Claudell [Harris Jr.] hit the big shot that kept them at bay. We’ve got to execute better when teams throw something at us.”

***Q: Where are you trying to attack the 1-3-1 zone defense?***

**CJ:** “We’re trying to get it below the free throw line and space the court. We’ve got four or five sets. When they’re flat pickups like that, we like to set a ball screen in the middle of the court and outnumber them on one side. They did it at times, but their defense had a lot to do with it. They never did it when No. 2 [Zachary Davis] wasn’t up top. He’s active and long, and it’s hard for our smaller guards to make good passes.”

***Q: How did you see their defense improve from the first game, and how tough is it to play a team that plays that well on defense?***

**CJ:** “We expected them to be better. We came out of the gates and hit them pretty hard. The crowd got into it. We knew that they were going to be in the friendly confines, and they had a couple of near misses with Auburn and Florida. We knew that wasn’t going to pop their balloon.”

“I was rooting for them to beat Florida for a bunch of different reasons. Coach [Lamont] Paris does a great job. Heck, he was coach of the year last year in this league, and he hasn’t forgotten how to coach. They were definitely well-prepared for us today.”

***Q: RJ Melendez told us, 'I'm not playing for the name on the back, I'm playing for the name on the front.' When you're playing in an environment like this, how badly do you need that attitude to be successful?***

**CJ:** "If you don't have that current running through your team in the hard games, you're not going to win. Guys will go solo, and some people won't even notice it. In their minds, they're like, 'Screw it, we're not going to win', or, 'we're winning, so I'm going to get a little me time'. I certainly love hearing that. I wouldn't expect anything else from him or from any of the guys that are playing a lot of minutes in our rotation. It still feels good to hear it."

**Forwards KeShawn Murphy and RJ Melendez**

***Q: You had to find a way today, how did you guys get it done?***

**KM:** "We just stuck to the script. We stayed together as a team and stuck with the scheme our coaching staff gave us. We were to pull it off."

***Q: You had a really good game offensively, what was working for you on that end of the court?***

**KM:** "Just being around the rim. I had a soft touch around the rim and made shots that I could get off. I couldn't get many rebounds today, but I helped at the rim."

***Q: We talked about short rolls down the middle of the lane earlier, is that what you utilized in the second half?***

**KM:** "Yes, sir. Lately, it's been open. They've been high on Hubb [Josh Hubbard] a lot. So, short rolls and deep rolls have been open for all of SEC play, and that's what we did."

***Q: Where do your post moves come from?***

**KM:** "That's just footwork. I practiced with Tolu [three-year teammate Tolu Smith III]. I've just been working on my game all the time. Yeah, he taught me a couple of moves. I'm not going to lie."

***Q: RJ, what does a win like this mean for a team that didn't necessarily have their best today?***

**RJM:** "It means a lot. We've been working on it because we needed a road win. We needed to get back in the win column. We should've sealed it earlier, but we got to overtime. We knew we had to keep playing hard and keep rebounding. We had to make sure we kept playing hard to come out with a road win."

***Q: What was your team talking about in the late timeouts when South Carolina started making runs?***

**KM:** "We just had to stay together. Stick to the script and finish what we came here for."

**RJM:** "We trust any player that steps on that court. Anybody that comes out, we know they're going to impact the game."

***Q: RJ, you only had one shot attempt today, and yet you had seven rebounds. Why do you keep going to the glass so hard even though you aren't getting shots?***

**RJM:** "I'm playing for the name on the front of the jersey, not the back. I'm playing hard for my guys. If shots don't go my way, that doesn't matter. I fumbled the transition dunk, but I just made sure that I was doing the right things to get my guys in the winning column. That's what I came here for. I'm not worried about points or anything, just playing hard on defense. The offense will come on its own"