

**2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**  
**No. 14 Mississippi State at Vanderbilt – January 7, 2024**

**Head Coach Chris Jans**

***Q: You are one of three teams that has won an SEC game on the road so far, how did you get it done??***

**CJ:** "It took all 40 [minutes]. We had a comfortable lead. But, like everyone in this league, nobody will go away. We certainly talked about that coming into the game. They're very physical on the ball, and it was hard to create angles on a lot of possessions."

***Q: What was the difference between Michael Nwoko's game against South Carolina compared to tonight?***

**CJ:** "I thought he looked terrific. He had a whole different vibe. He was more athletic and physical. He had some great rebounds in traffic. I liked how he looked, that's the Mike that we need. He just looked good. He was defending better, and he had more pop in his step. We need him to be like that every single night."

***Q: How did you know that Vanderbilt would press coming off of a late timeout and that you needed to throw long?***

**CJ:** "I didn't know for sure. For me, it looked like that would be the play if you're trying to win the game. You try to push all your chips in the middle [of the table] at that point. Every team's got a home run play like that, but I was a little disappointed we didn't get a layup from it. We did get some pressure relief, and we had a full [shot] clock to do it. It would've been nice to get a basket, though. It was really luck of the draw because if you don't get that, you get three guys that are bunched up. If it wasn't open, I wouldn't look very smart."

***Q: When Claudell Harris Jr. hit a long-range three-pointer to make it an eight-point game, was that a planned play? What was your mindset coming off of that timeout?***

**CJ:** "No, that was a shot-clock situation. That was evidence of all his time in the gym and hard work. If they score, it's a one-possession game. So, I told them that we had to go and win the game. Don't just hold them off, don't look at the clock, just go win [the game]. We can't just hope that they'll go away."

"That was a big thing, having the right mindset. We'll address how the game got close in the first place [in film]. We were great in the first half, with our activity and our physicality. We had a stretch in the second half where it was just awful. It was very frustrating. I didn't do a good job of putting guys in the right position. We tried to run stuff that didn't involve three on the ball and got out of rhythm. So, that helped them come back."

***Q: How much did KeShawn Murphy's length make a difference on defense tonight?***

**CJ:** "Yeah, he was okay. I thought down the stretch that he was struggling. He wasn't really making a stand. I don't honestly know what he was doing. He wasn't guarding their big men how we want him to guard them, but it happens."

***Q: How big was Shawn Jones Jr.'s contribution tonight?***

**CJ:** "He was big, and I called him out in the locker room [celebration]. His defense and his physicality were awesome. Everyone talks about free throws because we were 16-for-19 tonight. Shawn shot it with confidence, and that made a huge difference."

***Q: Does it feel good to go back home to a sold out crowd on Saturday sitting at 2-0 in the SEC?***

**CJ:** "It does. When we looked at the schedule, that was the hope. We wanted to start strong at home. Then, we wanted to come to Vanderbilt and find a way to scratch and claw. Now, we have Kentucky. I would've rather that they'd won their game tonight, to be honest. You can imagine what they're going to be doing practice-wise, but that's the way it is."

"I can promise that we're not going to be resting on our laurels. There's plenty of ammunition from this game. It'll be a late night getting in, but we'll turn the page. It'll be a great setting for this opportunity to get a big win at home."

***Q: How great was it to hear the 'Maroon-White' chant on the road again?***

**CJ:** "It was awesome. I told the guys before the game that we'd already done this in Memphis. There's enough Maroon in this building that we'll hear them if we play well."

**Forwards Cameron Matthews and RJ Melendez**

***Q: What was the mindset going into the end of the game?***

**RJM:** "We just wanted to stick to the game plan and trust my teammates so that I could put them in the right place at the right time."

***Q: Cam, how did the defense set up your offense to help win this game?***

**CM:** "It made the game easier for us. I feel like that's our identity now, getting back and being physical. We just play defense."

***Q: What does it say about your team's depth that two of your leading scorers [Josh Hubbard and Riley Kugel] had a down game, and your team was able to pull out a win?***

**RJM:** "We just have a lot of guys who can score the ball. Josh [Hubbard] can go off on any given night, and the same with Riley [Kugel]. We just have to do what we can to win."

***Q: How did you put this Vanderbilt crowd behind you and push through for a road win at the end of the game?***

**CM:** "We just stayed locked in. In the second half, it got pretty loud. But, I've got faith in our guys, and they've got faith in me. We just played smart, made the right plays and did what we do best to win the game."

***Q: You guys have both been through the battles in the SEC, how tough is it to win on the road in this conference?***

**CM:** "I mean, you see it on the internet all the time, this is the best conference in the country. From top-to-bottom, you've got really great coaches and great players. It's going to be a dog fight against every team on every night."

***Q: You get a chance to play in front of another sold out crowd, how excited are you to play against Kentucky on Saturday?***

**RJM:** "We're super excited to get back to the Hump and play in-front of a packed house. We've just got to go out there and best our play to defend the Hump."