

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. LSU– March 12, 2025

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Opening Statement

CJ: “The game was back and forth the first, I don't know, half of the first half. We found some footing. Obviously, we had some guys make some shots, especially to my left [Claudell Harris Jr. and Josh Hubbard]. We had a great margin at halftime.”

“Anytime you're in that situation, I can't imagine any coach in America not having a similar speech to their guys about the first five minutes is going to be crucial. The score is going to get out of hand, or they're going to fight back in the game. Unfortunately, for us, it was the latter. That didn't make us very happy. We were just sloppy with the ball. We had two inbound turnovers that just can't happen at this point in the season with these many games under your belt.”

“Fortunately, they regrouped. We had some leaders step up in some huddles and kind of set the tone for everybody. We were able to play better till the final buzzer went off.”

Q: In terms of the defense, things have been a little bit up and down last couple of months, weeks. Today 62 points. What did you just see from this team's defensive effort?

CJ: “We had a long talk Monday before we started preparing for the SEC Tournament as a whole. But certainly, the LSU game was at the forefront. We just talked about how disappointed I think all of us were in some of our recent games, especially on that side of the ball. Our last game against Arkansas, we scored 92 points and lost. That's not something that we've done a lot since we've arrived.”

“We really just tried to reset and get everyone to buy in and believe because myself to them, we've had great games and great stretches where we played at a high level on the defensive end. But, for whatever reason, we couldn't sustain it long enough and have that be our backbone.”

“That was the mantra, is that we were going to go back to the basics. We did a lot of defensive stuff, drills that we hadn't done for months to try to get everybody just mentally focused and understanding that if we're going to win games down here, it's got to start on that end of the floor. The first half was really, really good. The second half was just okay. Giving up 24 [in the first half]. After we settled in, I thought the first five or 10 minutes, we were just okay. The last 10 minutes, it was some of our best defense we've played all year long.”

Q: I think Cameron Matthews had four steals in this game. Even when he's not scoring, he's impacting the game in a plethora of ways. What does he do for you to get you back to the defensive identity you want to have?

CJ: “Yeah, he's our engine that way. Everyone that's really watched us play knows that he's a big steal guy. He creates steals for others, too, by getting a lot of deflections. He's our motor. His energy level lifts everybody up. Not as good or confident, to be honest with you, on either end of the floor when he's not out there. But he's had some big games for us steal-wise.”

“Obviously, the stat sheet doesn't jump out at you. With him, you don't see what's going on in the huddles. Even with him talking to me and trying to get me under control a little bit, which that doesn't happen very often with a player. With him, I acknowledge that he's got our utmost respect as a staff of being here with us the whole time that we've arrived. He's emerged into obviously a great player and even a better leader.”

Q: Plenty of people know what this team can do defensively. To score 91 with only one player scoring in double figures. What does that say about the depth of your offense?

CJ: "Again, I wasn't happy with the Arkansas game, no one was. But, there's a little part of me that's coached myself a little bit that, hey, if we can continue to play offense like that and share the ball and have multiple guys take some pressure off of Josh, which we did there. Then, we did again today."

"Certainly, Josh had that amazing run in the first half, but other guys had some runs themselves and made some shots. We got out in transition and showed our athleticism. You mentioned to those guys, and I get it, about five games in five days. We don't talk about that at all. It hasn't been mentioned. We're trying to win the next game, that's all we're focused on. We don't talk anything but that. If you take care of that one, you'll have another opportunity. That's the way you have to approach it."

Q: Back to the defensive stretch in the first half, you said you think it was one of the best you've seen from this team this season. When that happens, what is going well with the defense?

CJ: "I mean, it always starts with how you're guarding the ball. Usually, most mistakes that lead to wide-open looks or even good looks for the offense, more often than not it goes back to a mistake that happened on the ball either just being out of position or your footing was not right. You weren't into the ball, you weren't dictating or you were letting them kind of basically dictate how this catch was going to go. That's a big thing for us, is to be on the ball and the right disposition and be the attacker, if you will, on defense."

"I felt like we had a stretch there where we were kind of running the show on defense. We were telling them this is the way it's going to be on this possession. Hopefully, our guys will feel good about that and have confidence to continue to do it."

Q: What's it been like to go through this version of the SEC this season?

CJ: "It's been awesome. Like, I'm on record saying it all fall. It's awesome for all of us for of the obvious reasons, right? Exposure and the attention the league is receiving. Love being a part of it. When you're in December and you're looking at the metrics, you're like, wow, we're going to have so many opportunities not that we haven't the first two years, but it's obviously super-sized this year with the quad one games that everybody had, the opportunities that everybody had."

"Certainly, there were nights when it wasn't so awesome when you didn't play well, you got beat by some amazing programs and teams that we had this year. Hopefully, it's going to help everybody once we get into postseason play because of the quality of competition that you play every single night."

Q: There's a strong argument to be made it might be harder to win the SEC Tournament than going to the NCAA Elite Eight or NCAA Final Four. What are your thoughts on that?

CJ: "That's a great question. Unfortunately, I haven't thought about that at all. Hopefully, you should ask some of these other coaches, and they can give you a better answer. That's a lot. I understand the question. Like I said, it makes a lot of sense. I'm going to stay focused on Missouri and trying to prepare for that particular game."

Guard Josh Hubbard and Guard Claudell Harris Jr.

Q: Josh, midway through the first half, the lead is two points. Then, the team doesn't allow a field goal for the rest of the 10 minutes of the first half. What did you see in that stretch?

JH: "Yeah, I feel like in that stretch we were just playing Bulldog basketball. Getting after the ball, getting deflections and getting defensive rebounds. We've been preaching that ever since we got here. Like I said earlier up there in the press, as long as we have that mindset just coming out defending, rebounding the ball, we can just be a scary team."

Q: Claudell, there was another stretch similar to that in the second half where the defense clamped it up. Do you think that's what this defense looks like when it's playing at its best right now?

CHJ: "Our defense was definitely good today. I wouldn't say it's at our best. We did make some defensive mistakes that we made up for with our athleticism. But we're just going to watch the film, watch where we messed up and be better tomorrow."

Q: You're playing in the first round, meaning if you want to win this tournament, you win five games in five days. How much confidence does a 30-point win give you?

JH: "It's definitely motivating. Like you said, five games in five days isn't easy, but I feel like we're off to a good start. We were just motivated for this game. We just take it one day at a time. We don't look forward or look in the past, we just be where our feet are."

Q: Josh, you had 30 points against LSU the first time and 26 tonight. Anything you see that makes it not easy but comfortable for you to score?

JH: "I mean, I was just taking what the defense gave me. Besides that, I don't know how to answer that question, to be honest. Just being out there having fun."

Q: Josh, obviously when you're hitting three's, this offense can really reach its ceiling. What is the maximization, I guess, of this offense look like to you?

JH: "For us, it all starts on defense. Goes back to defense. How we get to the ball, get deflections and Steals, that's when we are at our best. That's how we maximize our offense."

LSU Head Coach Matt McMahon Opening Statement

MM: "Disappointing end to a challenging couple of months for us and our team, but really want to give a lot of credit to Mississippi State. I thought they were terrific. They were locked in and ready to go. They played with incredible efficiency on the offensive end."

"We just played them 10 or 11 days ago. Obviously, very concerned about [Josh] Hubbard. His shot making, just phenomenal. Even when we trapped him, he was still able to defeat the traps and get buckets. Then, I thought their bench was huge, [KeShawn] Murphy, [Claudell] Harris [Jr.] and [Shawn] Jones [Jr.]. Those three came in and played at a high level."

"Unfortunately, in the first half, turnovers and missed free throws were really detrimental to us, and our opportunity to hang around in the game. Mississippi State certainly made us pay by their best three-point shooting night of the season."

Q: When you got to the locker room, what did you tell your team? What was the message?

MM: "I just thanked them for the opportunity to coach them season. Then, just talked about some of the life lessons that you encounter along the journey."

"Obviously, it's a lot more fun when you win, and things go the way you would like. But how you respond and handle that. The lessons you take from it, the things you learn and the relationships you hope have been built as you move forward. It was a very brief and short message there."

Q: They got a lot of steals and aggressive on the ball. What little things do they do defensively that can frustrate teams?

MM: "I think Coach Jans has always done an outstanding job on the defensive side of the ball. They have great, number one, on-ball defenders. [Cameron] Matthews, I think is as good as anyone in the country guarding the basketball. Then, when you do get a slight advantage and you beat them, they do a great job of converging on the basketball with very active hands. Then, they get a lot of steals. That's why they gave up such a high percentage of three-point shots, not necessarily the shooting percent, I'm saying percentage of shots taken."

"When they converge on the ball, you got to spray it out and be able to step up and knock down three's against them. I think in SEC play, they gave up 11 made threes a game. We just weren't able to knock down some of those shots down today. Credit to them for their pressure and aggressiveness on the defensive side."

Q: Vyctorius [Miller] and Corey [Chest] were both out due to injury. Is that why they didn't travel today?

MM: "Yeah, both still out. Have not been able to return to practice. Corey has had the foot injury. Vyctorius has had the ankle sprain from the last game against Mississippi State. With them being injured, no reason to have them miss a week of school. So, they're back doing their rehab and handling their academics."

Q: Obviously, this ends the SEC part of the season. Any thought about potential NIT qualification?

MM: "We haven't even looked that far down the road. Just been locked in on trying to figure out ways to give ourselves a chance as we've had some of these injuries and illnesses and stuff down the stretch. Haven't even thought about what the next step would be there."

Q: If this does turn out to be the last game you coach this team, how will you remember this season?

MM: "There will be plenty of time to reflect on that. The disappointing piece is it felt like our trajectory was good, winning the nine games in the league last year schedule there. Just unable to get the job done at the level required, combination of injuries, the overwhelming level of talent and quality of teams in the SEC. Just weren't able to produce the type of results we wanted in league play. to get in the top half, having a strong non-conference"

Q: What is it like to go through a league like this?

MM: "This year has obviously been a gauntlet. You look at the quality of the teams, the talent, the age and the experience. Over the last five years, the SEC has clearly had the most NBA Draft picks. Now, a lot of the retention in the league. Getting Virginia Tech's best player coming into the league, Michigan State's starting point guard, Iowa's starting point guard and Duke's starting power forward, on down the line. Not to mention, the fact you have Hall of Fame coaches. It's the best of the best. That's why you've seen this historical season for the league."