

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. No. 21 Missouri – March 13, 2025

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: A tough finish to the game. What were you seeing that y'all weren't able to do down the stretch to keep the game where it was?

CJ: "Yeah, would definitely like to have those last four minutes back. Obviously, it doesn't work that way. It was winning time, and we didn't play well in winning time. That's the bottom line. They played better than we did. It was back and forth obviously throughout the game."

"I felt really good about it. Once we handled their punch in the first half, got back at halftime, then came out, I felt really good about where we were at, just the vibe of how the game was unfolding. In the end, time runs out, right? You got to make the plays. You got to get stops. We just weren't able to do it."

Q: It seems like you did a pretty good job running them off the three-point line. That opened things up inside. What were the keys defensively, and how do you feel the execution was?

CJ: "Well, the three-point line was a big part of our game plan. We've been deservedly much maligned for our percentage defensively this year. When we played them last time, they played from three. They have a lot of guys – Caleb Grill is a great player, have a ton of respect for him, but they've got a lot of good players that can do different things."

"Tonight, [Tony] Perkins and [Tamar] Bates just kind of had their way with us. But, when Grill was on the court, we were trying our best to limit his attempts, just make them as hard as we could. Just not let him get into any sort of rhythm because of his ability to just break games open."

"It exposed a little bit of not having as much gap support for the ball handler. They bullied us a couple times around the basket and laid the ball in. They did a good job of taking what we presented to them."

"We tried to limit them. Like I said, from the three, we did a pretty good job of that. They were 8-for-24. I thought most of Caleb's, but maybe one, were fairly well-contested. It definitely opened us up for some other deficiencies."

Q: In terms of specifically the offense in those last five minutes, I think there was only one field goal made. What were you seeing as the issue in that stretch with the offense?

CJ: "It's one of those games where there were so many pivotal plays. Looking forward, I guess in a weird way, to watching the last five minutes to lock into it a little bit better. I remember we had it at the rim a couple times and weren't able to finish it. I thought we had at least one or two pretty good looks at three when we were up, could have got it to five and had some momentum. We weren't able to do that. They took advantage of it. It came down to the last few plays. Certainly, the ending score wasn't indicative of how the game was played."

Q: Obviously, you're in a good position to get in the tournament three years in a row. What do you think about where your team is going into the big dance?

CJ: "Sure, 10,000-foot view, we're in a good position. But, wanted to be in a better position and wanted to be in a great position. What I kept telling our team down the stretch was that we control our own destiny. We didn't need any help. We had a fairly good first 15, 16 games of the season. We were in great position. Then, obviously the league is what it is this year, everyone for the most part, not everyone, but for the most part had stretches where it was tough."

"I thought we weathered the storm pretty good. But, we didn't finish the regular season with the overtime loss to Texas and then the one-point loss to Arkansas. Definitely hit the reset button coming down here and felt really good about where we were at and the vibe.

"Our practices and our focus, we played well last night. [Tonight], just didn't play well at winning time. That's the bottom line. We just didn't play well the last four minutes of this particular game. Eventually, we'll regroup here soon and be excited about what's next for us. But right now, it's opportunities we let get away from us."

Q: Last time you met Mizzou, you called them not just one of the better teams in the SEC but in the country that no one is talking about. With further national media coverage of the team, how would you say Mizzou has grown in your eyes?

CJ: "I was a pretty good predictor then, wasn't I (smiling)? I think what sticks out to me is just their depth. I mean, look at the stat line, [Mark] Mitchell played 12, 13, 14 minutes, right? It was no problem. They play so many guys. They have their main guys, but they can mix-and-match. It's kind of random sometimes, at least from where we sit. From where they sit, I'm sure there's rhyme or reason to it."

"I think their depth. Then, there's so many guys that have the ability to shoot the ball and stretch the D. They play with a lot of confidence. Coach Gates and his staff obviously do a really good job. They're really, really good. I mean, they're really, really good. To be honest with you, they're built for this kind of tournament with playing consecutive days, quick turnarounds and having that many pieces to work with that kind of depth. It wouldn't surprise me if they continued on winning."

Guards Josh Hubbard and Shawn Jones Jr.

Q: Josh, two-point game in the last four minutes. You have the timeout, go to the huddle. They closed on a 13-4 run. What did you see in the final few minutes?

JH: "Yeah, it was just a bad stretch for us and a good stretch for them. They just executed well offensively. They got us on a backdoor one time with Caleb Grill. We just had some defensive errors. Yeah, that was pretty much it."

Q: Shawn, last game you played Missouri, Caleb Grill had a really good game. Today he only had one three-pointer. How much of limiting him from beyond the arc was the game plan?

SJJ: "It was a big part. He's an elite three-point shooter. [Coach] Jans told us to run him off the three-point line and don't let him get any open looks. We tried to excel at that as best as we could."

Q: I know sometimes the start of these second halves, you were really the better team the first four or five minutes of the second half tonight. What was the message in the locker room at halftime?

JH: "We know in the past few games the second half we came out slow. We were preaching staying positive to each other, come out strong and stay positive. Just go out there and just dominate."

Q: Shawn, the team was struggling offensively. You gave them a nice lift in the first half. How did you feel like you were able to come in there and lift the team up?

JH: "Just come in and playing basketball. Playing defense first, the offensive game would come to me. To be confident in my shot and trust the offensive work we do. It all comes to me."

Q: Josh, in terms of the March Madness projections and things that are out there, this team is in a similar spot to where it was last year. Is there anything you think that's maybe different about this team that could possibly go on a run in the NCAA tournament?

JH: "Yeah, we're definitely a special team this year. Definitely, we can make some runs. Got the potential to be a scary team in March Madness. Hopefully, we just have to react well to this. We wanted this win, just look forward to next week."

Missouri Head Coach Dennis Gates

Opening Statement

DG: "I'm extremely proud of our program, our team and our coaching staff. We had great preparation mentally, physically and emotionally. I thought the atmosphere was great. Our SEC Tournament speaks for itself. I'll say this loud and proud, there should be 14 teams in the NCAA tournament from our conference."

Q: I didn't see the play, but what happened with Mark Mitchell? Any update on his status?

DG: "I don't even know what happened to be honest with you, I'm saying that honestly. I just take and adhere to what our doctors and our trainers say. I don't question those individuals at all. Mark knows what he can and can't do. He didn't want to put our team in a disadvantage if he's not at 100 percent. So, at the end of the day, he trusted our substitutions and our depth. He just didn't put himself back into the game. For me, that's a sign of great leadership. We'll see what the prognosis is."

Q: The fact that there was talk of him coming back in then, is that still...

DG: "There was talk, and there was talk absolutely. It's doctors' and player's decision. I wasn't on the bench. I kind of stand up the entire game. I look down, see who's available. It happened in the first half, correct? Yeah, so, I don't know yet. I'll get that information. Our SID, Jason, will release something if something needs to be released. I think we have the injury reports or something like that, right?"

Q: You get another matchup with Florida on the SEC Quarterfinals. You handed them their only home loss this season. The challenge of facing them a second time?

DG: "They're a No. 1 seed in the NCAA tournament. I don't know the strength of that No. 1 seed, but they're one of the top two, three teams in the country, in my eyes. I think no one has given them the amount of credit that they deserve. I don't know if they were even ranked No. 1 in the country for multiple weeks, but I do know that's how I look at them."

"It was a great atmosphere when we played in Gainesville. Todd Golden, I respect him, I respect their entire program. They're not the same team that they were then. I think they have gotten better. I think they've added a crucial piece to try to make an SEC Championship run and NCAA title run with their big fella. He's back. He's one of the best players in our conference. Obviously, the number of games he played didn't allow him to be on the All-Conference team, but he's an All-Conference type of guy. So, for me, both teams have gotten better. Both teams have gone through the storm of the regular season SEC. We're excited to break down film. They've been patiently waiting in their double bye, which they earned, to pursue an SEC title."

Q: Your defense basically didn't allow a field goal for the final five minutes of the game. What did you see from the defense?

DG: "Well, we allow free throws, and we fouled. That's what I do recall. The other part of it is, I thought our guys contested shots without fouling because they did a good job. [Josh] Hubbard, as well as -- who was it? -- Melendez that got fouled on three-point shots or even near the basket."

"I thought our guys set down, defended, rebounded, and played connected basketball. We went into our four-minute drill. They did a great job."

Q: Mississippi State seemed like they were really keying on Caleb Grill and limited his opportunities. That led things to open up for some of your other guys. Did you have to make any adjustments offensively based on what they were doing against him?

DG: "I thought when you look at the body of work of Chris Jans throughout his career, he essentially has always had one of the top defensive teams in the country. This team is the same way. They're one of the top defensive teams in our conference just from a strategic standpoint. Their toughness and obviously their personnel."

"When it comes down to Caleb Grill, he went 2-of-11. Do I think they stopped him from shooting? No. I think he rushed some shots. But, he made a crucial three to close out the half that gave us a sort of cushion. He ended up doing a great job playing connected basketball, and he ended up with three assists. He accounted definitely for some points. Ultimately, the gravity and attention that he provides allows our guards to get downhill simply because he cruised."

"Tamar Bates, and even Trent Pierce and Marques Warrick are respected shooters. You have to play those guys a certain way. What I'm thankful is that Tony Perkins and Tamar Bates had the game that they had. Those two guys obviously have done a great job. They filled in some areas. We shot 28 free throws, most obviously late. Our execution from the line was a little bit better than it was last outing."

Q: The big buckets you had tonight came out of cuts, Caleb moved well. What does that say about your team's connectivity on offense and how well you move without the basketball?

DG: "So, I thought it started defensively. First and foremost and secondly, we had probably close to 20 fast-break points where the game kind of evolved a little bit in the second half in our favor. We came back in halftime with a negative assist-to-turnover ratio. That got to an even and parallel number and stat, which is helpful."

"Obviously, finishing with 14 assists and 14 turnovers is great. Mississippi State took care of the basketball tonight. They did a tremendous job, but our field goal percentage defense in that first half as well as the second half. Like you said, that spurt of four minutes, they only shot a free throw or made a free throw. I thought our defense stepped up in a great way."

Q: You talk about finishing with the assist-to-turnover ratio. What does it mean after starting with eight turnovers in the contest to see your guys continue and grow and play with confidence?

DG: "Some was unforced. But, Mississippi State, again, Chris Jans, his identity and characteristics of his team, they force some turnovers. They obviously do a great job sealing baseline. I thought our guys were trying to make the right play."

"Mississippi State just made better defensive plays, and they were able to force us to some turnovers. I thought we settled down a little bit. You think of their eight offensive rebounds in the first half. Four of them were dead ball, meaning we didn't secure the ball. They were able to get baseline out-of-bounds. We simplified that or solved it in the second half, and we were a little bit more stronger with the ball. I thought we played on our toes, not our heels. Our guys were quick and responsive and instinctual."