

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes No. 24 Mississippi State vs. LSU – March 1, 2025

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: I asked Josh [Hubbard] about the adjustments at halftime. What were some things that you thought were points of emphasis, and what did you think of the execution in the second half?

CJ: “First, we reintroduced our team to number five for them, Cam Carter. He’s the guy we’ve been talking about leading into this game. We knew that potential was there because of him being here. Who wouldn’t want to come back to an old stomping ground of yours and try to get buckets? He was unbelievable the first 20 minutes. Hats off to him for the way he played, all night for that matter. He competed at a high level. He had a really nice game.”

“We certainly talked about that a lot, but they tweaked a couple of their sets that we hadn’t seen going into the game where they were setting some back screens with him. Our plan was to switch it. Then, after the back screen, he would run to the ball. So, we were switching it and staying top side. Well, instead of the guy receiving the screen, he’d just run away. So, the guy guarding Cam Carter was thinking he was switching. There was no one there to switch. So, he would run free to the ball. We hadn’t seen that so we’d sure that up.”

“Then, a couple other things in their zoom offense that we tried to change. Then, as the game progressed there in the second half, we started switching more ball screens. They were picking on Josh a little bit, trying to bang him up out front and get advantages that way.”

Q: Shawn Jones Jr. misses a couple free throws. Then, he bounces back and makes a couple dunks. Just talk about how proud you were of him bouncing back and getting the job done.

CJ: “You know the drill with Shawn. He always finds a way to be in the game when it’s hard. I trust him in those situations, and he knows what we’re trying to do. RJ [Melendez], obviously had some foul issues, so he had more opportunities that way. He just usually makes the right play. To add to it, he had a big three. He just seemed really focused and locked in. He was asking questions coming out of the huddles about the tweaks that I just mentioned and how we need to guard that. I’m just proud of his fight and his compete level, but that’s kind of what I expected from him.”

Q: Riley [Kugel]’s efficiency numbers the last couple games haven’t been great, but today he was really big with those two three pointers at the end of the first half. What did you like from him today?

CJ: “Yeah, it was a welcomed sight. Since he’s been inserted into the starting lineup, I don’t think from a raw data perspective that he’s been great. Certainly, there’s a lot more to it than what his stats say, especially on an old school stat sheet. But, that’s one of the best things about him. That’s what he’s supposed to do is fill it up a little bit that way being a scoring option for us. But, we stuck with it. We stuck with the same lineup, although there were conversations to switch it up, but we stuck with it.”

“He didn’t have a great run when he started even in this game, but we got back into it the second time and the ball went through the net. Anyone that’s ever played the game knows what that does for your confidence, and I think it really boosted his because it had been while since he’d done that. Then, I liked when he showed his physicality a couple times around the basket and backed him down. It was like it was a man’s game those couple possessions for him. Hopefully, that something he can continue.”

Q: How important was this win as we head into this last stretch of SEC play?

CJ: "I mean, it was as big a game as we've had all year long. I probably repeat that a lot. But, in this league this year, that's just the way it is. Every game has huge implications for a bunch of different things. We've talked at length about that heading into this game. Not just today, but the two days prior."

"When you're playing a team that's more than likely, it's a very, very small percentage that it's going to play in the NCAA Tournament, it can be hard. That's a different animal. It's a different energy. It's a different playing with house money. Let's go out there and hoop. Then, the other team who is still playing for that type of situation sometimes plays a little tight. They play not to lose rather than to win."

"I'm not going to go into the details of it, but I put some added pressure on them because I wanted them to feel that way. I wanted them to feel like it was a must-win, because I felt like it was for a number of different reasons, NET being one. I wanted to see how they'd act in that pressurized situation and hoping that we're in those type of games here shortly."

What's it like to coach a guy like Josh, especially today, where he was unstoppable. He was making shots from mid-range, outside, at the free-throw line at a high rate.

CJ: "I think he's improved his game on both ends. I'm not sure last year he would've done quite as much inside the three as he did this afternoon. He missed some early looks that were wide open. I think everyone was a little surprised."

"I love that he's at a place where he's worked so hard, and he's gotten that experience now of how to get a guy on your hip, get in the lane and use your strength and body and give a little bump and create a little space to fall away and make the shot. He's using his speed more on the offensive end too and surprise people in situations. He's getting to the line a lot and went to the line 10-for-11 tonight. He's an efficient free-throw shooter."

"I was trying to get him some more rest there in the second half, when we had that stretch of three media timeouts. That was his rest, you have to stay on the floor. I thought he played with a tougher mindset. What I love about Josh, and I've said this multiple times, it's a great quality to have is when you play the game and don't know what the score is. You have no idea if he's had a 30-ball, or if he's 0-for-10. He has the same demeanor, and it's a heck of a quality that is going to serve him well is whole entire life, especially athletically. I had nothing to do with that, but it's nice to have a guy out there that's a calm amongst the storm sometimes."

Guards Josh Hubbard and Riley Kugel

Q: Hubb, you came out firing there in the second half. You had 20 of your 30 points in the second half. What was the message from Coach Jans at halftime, and how well did you feel like you executed it?

JH: "We saw a few clips in the film room of where we were making most of our mistakes from. We adjusted to them. We just executed and played Bulldog basketball – getting stops [on defense] and pushing it [on offense]."

Q: Josh, you had 30 points and only made two three-pointers. How have you been working on expanding your game offensively?

JH: "Just being a complete player. That's what I worked on in the offseason – getting downhill, being aggressive and putting some pressure on the defense."

Q: How big was it to get this win after a couple tough performances the past few weeks?

RK: "It was a big one. Like we said coming in, every team you're playing in the SEC, it's going to be a dogfight. So, just try to get a win any way you can. In this type of league, any win is a good one."

Q: In the first half, you didn't make any three's. You end up hitting a three early in the second half. How did you feel at that moment to just get the snowball rolling after that?

JH: "It felt great, I had teammates and staff tell me to keep shooting after being a little frustrated in the first half after not seeing a few go in especially when I was open. But my teammates just keep me positive. They told me to keep shooting."

Q: Riley, in the second half, you had a play where you backed your man in from the 3-point line all the way into the paint. Is that something you feel like you can add to your game in this late part of the season?

RK: "Yeah, definitely. I like playing in the post, especially when it's a small defender on me like that. It just opens scoring opportunities for me and my teammates. So, it's fun to play in the post."

Q: Riley, the team missed its first seven three-pointers. Did you feel the pressure alleviate after you made a few late in the first half?

RK: "I didn't really feel any pressure at all. It was just a good, in rhythm shot for me. It felt good getting us back in a scoring rhythm."

Q: Josh, you had those two good games against Ole Miss and Texas A&M. You come back with a win today after two losses. How do you characterize where you and the team are right now?

JH: "We just couldn't let the last game or the game before that affect this game. We had to move on because like you said those two setbacks, we could have gotten those wins. So, we just didn't let that affect us. From now on, we just can't let this win affect the next game. We got to stay with it."

Q: We've seen you do this a few times the last couple of months where you blew past your defender and got an easy layup. Is that something you've been trying to add to your game?

JH: "The staff encourages me to get my speed into the game, especially in transition when we get a rebound. I'm the outlet. So, pushing the ball and putting pressure on the defense. Even if I don't get to drive, somebody is going to be open especially if I attract so much attention. Just try to create for others."

Q: Talk about your teammate Shawn Jones Jr., and he just seems like he always comes up with a big play when you need it. Talk about what he contributes to the team.

RK: "Shawn is going to be Shawn. He's a dawg. So, he's going to make the little plays that you need. That's not going to really make a huge impact on the fans, but it's a winning play. So, it's just like Shawn. Whenever he makes a play, we kind of expect it. But we know it's coming though, because it's Shawn."

LSU Head Coach Matt McMahon

Q: What was the difference with today's game compared to the last two games?

MM: "Much better on the glass after they had four offensive rebounds at the first media timeout. We got beat on some drives there. Obviously, [Josh] Hubbard took over and dominated late. [Riley] Kugel, I thought he had some amazing drives finding the lanes and taking it along the baseline to finish plays. It really hurt us. Offensively, the way Mississippi State plays. I believe we gave up seven made three's for 33 percent. They really converge on the ball, and they do a great job of swarming. We really had to shoot well from three today. We made nine for 25 percent, but it wasn't enough to win the game."

Q: State had 18 fast break points, and there were sometimes where there was no ball stoppage. What was going on that allowed them to get out on some of those runs?

MM: "It happened a couple of times there when we were trying to set a press. We missed a free throw, bad on the transition bucket. Hubbard is so difficult to stop. [Cameron] Matthews can really play 1-thru-5. He's like a point forward out there on the floor. He was really able to hurt us, not so much on the glass, but with the tempo on the floor."

Q: Only nine turnovers today and rebounded well against a good defensive team. How important is it to turn around for the Kentucky game on Tuesday?

MM: "Ball security and rebounding was much improved today. We couldn't make enough shots and get enough stops there in the second half. Credit to Mississippi State."

Q: I imagine there was an emphasis on getting Cam Carter going to start the game.

MM: "First half, really wanted to try and free him off some screens. Thought we did a nice job of getting him the ball there and then corner three's. He got us off to a great start on the offensive end. Thought we got really good looks in the first half. He was shooting from a high percentage especially, especially from behind the three-point line."

Q: What did you try to defensively against Josh Hubbard?

MM: "We tried to mix up Dji Bailey and Curtis [Givens III] on him, more size there in the first half. I thought we did a good job defensively of contesting his shots. The second half, we weren't able to get enough stops. I believe they shot 64 percent from the field in the second half. Really hurt us in the paint. Hindsight always 20/20. Probably should have tried more and throw the kitchen sink at him with nice ball screens and try to trap them. Hedged them and ending up to the rescreen action there. He really got to his spots, rose up and hit some 17 footers there to give State the lead."