

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes
Mississippi State vs. Baylor – March 21, 2025
NCAA Tournament – Round of 64

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Opening Statement

CJ: “Obviously, disappointed with the results. Unfortunately, we dug ourselves a pretty big hole there in the second half. I knew our kids would continue to fight back and put themselves in position to have a half to be in a one-possession game. Unfortunately, the ball or the call didn't go our way there late.”

Q: Coach, as you're down three trying to tie it, I imagine the game plan was probably to get Josh a three-pointer the way he'd been playing. Can you tell us about that play call, and why that didn't work out?

CJ: “Yeah, it had multiple options. It's a play that we put in not that long ago, to be honest with you. It's the first time we've ever run it exactly for this type of scenario where we had enough time to get one look, and then a second look. It's just two ball screens. We were dashing out of it, and then, trying to drag it. Then, bringing Josh behind the play after he handed the ball off and trying to get a heel-toe three. Certainly, at that point, you just never know how the other team is going to play it, but pretty early you could tell they weren't going to foul us. Internally, I thought we were going to get a shot. But unfortunately, it didn't go in.”

Q: Cameron [Matthews] said on the rebounding issues that they outplayed you all or they wanted it more than you all did. Were you surprised that they were able to have that success on the offensive boards that they did?

CJ: “They're a very good offensive rebounding team. Their numbers show that. The film showed it. So, am I surprised? I don't know. Disappointed, because we certainly talked about it until we're blue in the face and showed the film. It was one of our major keys going into the game was to beat them up on the backboard. That was what we talked about a lot in the first half was discrepancy and the amount of second chances they were getting.”

“We kept telling them that our first shot defense had been good enough, but we weren't finishing the possession. Again, you've got to give the Baylor team a bunch of credit for playing really hard and beating our checks and crashing the glass. It's not that we were surprised that they were doing that. The other thing that we were disappointed in at halftime was we wanted to attack, attack, attack, and get in the paint and live in the paint and not settle early in possessions unless it was just a great rhythm, open three for you personally.”

“I didn't feel like we did a good enough job with that. We were 7-for-10 from two in the first half. I think they had 20 paint touches, and we only had 9. That's just a really, really low number for us all year long, especially when we emphasized it heading into this particular game. Because we just wanted to try to get inside of them and attack the goal and put 15 in tough situations to shield the rim and put him in ball screens. I think he ended the half with maybe one foul and just didn't feel like we did a good enough job in the first half of doing that.”

Q: You talked about how it's not necessarily a goal anymore for this program to make the NCAA Tournament, but to make it and win some games and go on a run in the NCAA Tournament. How frustrating is that in this moment right now to be back in the same spot?

CJ: "That's a fair question, but let's be clear. Getting to the NCAA Tournament is still a goal for us every single year, and there's a lot of teams out there that would trade places with us in a heartbeat for what we've accomplished this season and the last three combined."

"But, at the same time, we're disappointed. Our goals were higher this year than they've ever been. We talked about it in the summer. We talked about it in the fall with you folks, and certainly with our internal meetings that we had. We felt like we had positioned ourselves with the experience, with the success and that it was time for more."

"I just talked about it with the team. We'll have different perspective at some point. But, right now, we didn't finish. We weren't able to accomplish the goals that we had set for our team this particular year. So, it's disappointing. It hurts. I know our players, I know our program, I know our fans wanted it in the worst way and I hate the fact that we weren't able to deliver it."

Q: Coach, Cameron [Matthews] was saying that they weren't tough enough, but correct me if I'm wrong, it seemed like they had a good knack of just deflecting balls out. Was that something special they were able to do today?

CJ: "They're a very good offensive rebounding team. Coach Drew and his staff and their players have obviously had a really good season. I'm not in their huddles or prep or practice. I don't know if that was part of their plan. It's not something I noticed a ton on video heading into this particular game, but it was part of why we had the rebounding differential that we had."

"But, at the end of the day, we had our chances. We had the ball, we had to run out and we turned it over. We had a chance, and it just, I don't know, wouldn't go our way. Then, we had the trap at halfcourt and -- I don't know. I can't wait to watch the film to see how all that transpired."

Guard Josh Hubbard and Forward Cameron Matthews

Q: Cam, your team had a pretty sizable advantage inside, but they were able to get a lot of offensive rebounds. I think they had 15, a lot of second-chance points. What were they doing well you think to get those second chance points and connect on those?

CM: "They weren't really doing anything special. They just played tougher than us tonight. They just kind of punked us tonight. That's all it was."

Q: Josh, on that final play where Claudell shot the three, was the shot designed or play designed for you? What did you see in that sequence?

JH: "It was a set drawn for really three options. Claudell had a good chance. I was coming off a stagger. So, it was really whatever the defense gave us. We just reacted to what they threw at us."

Q: This just being your final Mississippi State game, the program's pretty clearly made a lot of progress since you've been here with three straight NCAA Tournament experiences. Where do you see this program right now in the future ahead as you depart?

CM: "The program is just going to keep going up. They've got a great head coach here to my right, Coach Jans. They're going to get some guys next year and keep practicing hard. Hopefully, next year, we come up here and get a win next year."

Q: Cam, looking back at your time here, you've had a lot of ups and downs, a lot more ups, I'm sure. How do you describe your time here? A guy in the middle of the transfer portal era sticking it out and staying with Mississippi State. Why was Mississippi State your choice for five years?

CM: "First and foremost, I want to thank God for giving me the opportunity to play this great game of basketball. I want to thank all my past teammates and current teammates, Coach Howell and Coach Jans for believing in me. I just feel as if Mississippi State, it just felt like home, really welcoming. The people, they're great fans. I just wanted to stay home and have something to play for and be proud of."

Q: Josh, particularly with the turnovers, it seemed like that played a pretty big factor, especially in the first half. What did you see in that regard with the turnovers?

JH: "They did great at turning us over. They created energy and points off of it. Like you said, we had some bad turnovers in the first half. It was a little better in the second [half]. We still had some silly ones. Yes, those are the ones you wish you could go back and just fix."

Baylor Head Coach Scott Drew

Opening Statement

SD: "First and foremost, I want to thank God for an opportunity to coach in the NCAA Tournament. Really blessed. Not everybody gets a chance to do that. Second of all, really proud of how we competed. We knew coming in Mississippi State's a very physical team, extremely well-coached. I thought our guys really competed on the glass and did a great job."

"I don't have final stats as stats went down in the second half, but from my recollection, I think we did a pretty good job on the glass. As far as these guys go, this tournament, is going to be a lot of one, two-possession games, and the beauty of playing in the Big 12 and having a lot of those, at least they had the experience. They've been in them. So, I think they'll see most of what we can expect."

Q: Coach, kind of the same thing I asked the players. You have a player that spent a lot of his time in Durham. The fact that he might have to go up against his former team, how much does that help you with Jeremy Roach, having him?

SD: "I'm sure we're going to pick his brain. At the end of the day, though, I know he loves Duke and had a great experience. I know from when our past assistants that we coach against, it's bittersweet. You love to talk about them and brag about them, but it really stinks whoever loses because you know the season's over. We'll definitely, though, pick his brain and try to find out. I know they have a lot of different players, but I know there will be some things that he can help us with hopefully."

Q: You've talked about how at this time of year you don't have to say much to motivate them. The active hands that you all had today, a lot of steals, some blocks, forced some turnovers, did you like the energy that you guys showed?

SD: "We had to have that because Mississippi State has a tremendous offense, scoring a lot of points. If you let them get a bunch of shots, they're making a good percentage. So, we tried to do our work early and tried to make it as hard as possible. This March, everyone's going to play really hard. Everyone's going to compete. You pray you make your free throws, knock down shots and you execute."

Q: It's the second straight year Mississippi State was a No. 8 seed and lost to No. 9. Maybe it's just a coincidence? What is it about an 8-9 seed that makes it a tough matchup??

SD: "It's closest to the bracket to begin with. The second thing is I think you can throw those numbers out. I know we're the only team coming into the tournament that was a top three seed four years in a row."

"The reason nobody has a perfect bracket after the first weekend is because those numbers give some false impressions to March. What I mean by that is it's March Madness for a reason. It's not the best of seven, like the NBA, where the best team wins. It's who's the best for that 40 minutes. What we love about college basketball is the parity. When you've got 18 to 23 year olds, you never know really what's going to happen. It's great for fans, and it makes coaches lose hair."

Q: Advancing into the NCAA Tournament, round of 32 coming up, the transfer portal opens up on Monday. How do you kind of juggle between the two situations happening simultaneously?

SD: "I'll be honest, I wish there was a way you could open up after the tournament so everybody could just focus on their teams and not have that distraction. I know us coaches are all going through a transition period and trying to figure out what's best for everybody because there's 364 schools."

"But, at the end of the day, you have multiple people on your staff. You delegate stuff, but I'll be honest, it's not easy. This time of year, you want to reward teams that are still playing. You want to give them their attention. I feel if there was ever in the next couple of years, we can figure better ways to do things. I know we'll land there, but I know right now we'd much rather have that distraction problem in the other way."

Q: VJ's slowish start in the first half, what did you see him do to settle in? Why do you keep going to him down the stretch?

SD: "I think first and foremost, VJ, because he's so highly rated on the draft boards, people just assume that that's a score. VJ doesn't have to score to impact a game, VJ is an all-around player. He gets comparisons to Dwyane Wade, Russell Westbrook, and the thing that those guys did is their athleticism and their ability to assist, defend."

"It affects the game. So, if he's scoring or not, he's helping us. I know people might think, well, he got off to a sluggish start. He just missed some good shots. At some point, he's going to make them, but he's always affecting the game because he's a great teammate. He's a winner, and he makes winning plays. Really, to be honest, that's refreshing as a coach and a player that doesn't rely on a guy that the only thing he can do is make the shot. If he's not making it, he can't help you. Anyway, it's a joy coaching him because he affects every part of the game. It's not about I, it's about team."