

**2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**  
**No. 25 Mississippi State vs. Texas – March 4, 2025**

**Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans**

***Q: Obviously, they doubled Josh Hubbard the whole game. How were they able to defend him so well especially in the first half?***

**CJ:** "Yeah, they obviously had a very good game plan against Josh in terms of limiting his touches. When he had the ball, they were trapping the ball screen and staying with it until he threw the ball out of it. They actually did it to quite a bit of our guys in the first half. They just made our bigs catch it in space and make plays. He had one shot attempt at half time. I can't imagine he's had a game in his career where he's only had one shot attempt. We've got to do a better job earlier of figuring out how to adjust to something like that and get him more opportunities. In the second half, he did have more. I think he had 11 shot attempts in the second half, and he got to the line 10 times. They did a good job with that."

***Q: RJ Melendez was very emotional post-game, were any other guys in the locker room that emotional? Why do you think that was?***

**CJ:** "Because they care. They care about each other. They care about their craft. They care about this team. They want to win. I've told you guys before how much I believe in this team and the parts of it. They've sweat and grinded. They've gone to work every single day, and they've allowed us to coach them. Then, when it doesn't work out the way you want it to, it hurts. Our locker room is very somber, to say the least. Obviously, we've lost plenty of games this year, but that was a hard one to swallow for all of us."

***Q: Why did you stick with Riley Kugel after the slow start and how did you see him respond down the stretch?***

**CJ:** "If you really think about it, it was a really similar unfolding as against LSU. His first two runs, he didn't play very well on either end. He was struggling on offense, and his motor wasn't running on defense. But, we did stick with him, and he played better."

"Then tonight, that gave us more confidence. You're right though, he hasn't really proven to us that he's capable of doing that very often. Not getting off to a very good start and then changing it and being more productive. The thing that made me stick with it tonight was that he was first to the floor for a couple of loose balls, which I don't ever remember him doing to be honest with you. I've been on him about it, and he showed people his strength, his core, and his athleticism and his fight. He was defending out there. He was scrapping and competing."

"Of course, I'm the old coach. I'm going to tell him that that's why he ended up playing better. It fueled his game. Karma is karma, man. That's how it works. Like you said, we wouldn't have been in that position if he hadn't made some of the plays that he did down the stretch."

***Q: What do you think it's going to take to find consistent positive momentum?***

**CJ:** "This is March, right? That's what everybody's searching for. We had a great second half against LSU. We came out of the gates [tonight] exactly how you'd draw it up. We were flying around, the crowd was into it and their bench didn't have a great vibe. I'm sure that's not the start that they envisioned."

"Then, we had a group in there that didn't play very well. They were sloppy with the ball. We weren't finishing at the rim. Then, the last four plus minutes of the first half, was just not good."

"Momentum wasn't great, but at that point I told them that a lot of times you say that you scrapped back and scratched and clawed. Of course you did, you'd better. I can't imagine you not doing that. That's the expectation, that's the standard, especially at the level and the league that we're playing in."

"We don't have a lot of opportunities to find the consistency that you were asking about. I was hoping that we'd win back-to-back games at home and have some momentum going into our last road game, which is obviously a very difficult place to play. But what these kids have shown me is that this group's mental toughness, resiliency, and belief in one another helps me know that they're going to regroup. They're going to be ready for one last road trip before Nashville."

***Q: How do you think your seniors have helped leave this program a better place than how they found it?***

**CJ:** "You know it's probably better served for the end of the season. I did tell those guys in the locker room that I felt bad for them, because you want to have a good memory for your senior night, right? At the same time, I told them before the game, 'I'm not celebrating you right now. I'm not doing the whole thank you for everything thing and hug it out. We've got more basketball to play. Enjoy the acknowledgement with your family and let's go do what we do.' We'll have time later to do all of that and recognize them in a way they deserve. To me, when the season's complete, that's when you think about that kind of thing. I'm sure we'll have plenty of time to do that."

***Q: It was a pretty wild last nine seconds of regulation, what was the message to your guys going into overtime?***

**CJ:** "The biggest thing that I had, which didn't work out, was to hit them first. The way we came back to put it into overtime, that can take a lot out of a team. You feel like you have the upper hand and that you're going to win the game. Then, you don't. I paid close attention to their bench and their huddle and their vibe right away. It wasn't great. Unfortunately, my message was that we needed to punch them first. We needed to kick them while they were down and keep it going. Obviously, we didn't. They scored in the first couple of possessions and got up by five again. It was a crucial part of the game."

"The tip was odd at best. I don't know what happened with the tip. We didn't really have a chance to get it. They scored on the first possession. Then, we didn't. Then, they scored again. Then, I felt like it was the end of the game again, where we're fighting uphill to find and get in position to steal it or send it to another overtime."

**Guard Shawn Jones Jr. and Forward RJ Melendez**

***Q: What was Texas able to do to keep you guys down offensively in the first half?***

**SJJ:** "Just switching, I feel like that's what they do well. We just didn't do enough on our part. It's something we have got to work on."

***Q: RJ, what is going through your mind right now after your last home game here at Mississippi State?***

**RJM:** "Arkansas. We have to go onto the next one. This game's over. We have to get ready for a tough road win. Everybody loves March. It's a beautiful thing to be a part of, and I'm looking forward to it."

***Q: RJ, this is a Texas team who might not make the NCAA Tournament. How difficult is it to navigate this gauntlet of a league?***

**RJM:** "It's just college basketball. Anything can happen any night, and I feel like we just didn't come ready to play in the first half. That hurt us. We dug ourselves into a hole, tried to crawl back and fight at the end. It just wasn't enough."

***Q: Do you feel like you're finally getting a bigger role after the last two games?***

**SJJ:** "No, I still have the same role. Some nights just are your night, and some nights are not your night. I feel like me just playing basketball and having a love and passion for the game is what allowed the scoring to be shown tonight."

***Q: Shawn, you guys have faced some adversity before the season. What was Coach Jans message to you guys after the game?***

**SJJ:** "The same as always. Stay together. It's basketball, anything happens on any given night. We aren't perfect players. We aren't going to win all of the games. Keep your head up, keep pushing and there's a bigger picture at the end. That's March."

***Q: Obviously, Texas Guard Tre Johnson is a great player. What were he and Tramon Mark able to do tonight?***

**RM:** "Johnson's a great player. He's been doing that the whole season. We just missed some scout assignments on him and left him open a couple shots. We let him get in a rhythm. As good of a player he is and once he catches a rhythm, it's hard to stop him and get him off."

***Q: What do you guys feel were some of the biggest struggles you had when it came to working in the paint, rebounding, and just second chance points?***

**SJJ:** "Definitely rebounding early. I looked up at one point, and they had 28 rebounds. I think we had like 20 or 22. I feel like that was a big part. Also, a lot of ticky-tacky fouls cost us the game, and us just not playing well down the stretch."

**Texas Head Coach Rodney Terry**

***Q: It's very gratifying to see your team be able to break through and make key shots and stops what does tonight's win mean?***

**RT:** "Really proud of our guys in terms of every guy came in the game and all gave great contribution towards the way they played with energy and activity. Just played for one another tonight. It's not an easy place to come in and win against an NCAA tournament team. Coach Jans does a great job over here in terms of the way they play defense and offense."

"I thought we did a great job with [Josh] Hubbard. Key guy, zero points at the half. I thought Coach McClain did a great job with the defensive gameplan. Coach Haith did a great job with the offensive game plan. Give my guys a lot of credit for following through in the game."

***Q: What did you think about Tramon Mark's performance after injury?***

**RT:** "He really did great. He didn't practice the last couple days, wasn't sure if he was going to be able to play today. Warren (Young) has done a great job with him over the last couple days. He ended up a shot that really helped him. We had gone through all the MRI information. Everything was okay, and it was something that we needed to get down. Once it kicked in, latter part of today, he was ready to go."

***Q: You've mentioned getting another scorer going besides Tre Johnson. Tremon Mark certainly provided that today.***

**RT:** "When you've done it at a high level, we win games when Tremon is playing like that. I mean, Tre, look what he does. Our other guys I thought just did a lot of great thing that didn't show up in the box for the first little bit. I thought Julian Larry going at it really hard for us on [Josh] Hubbard and did a nice job [defensively]. I thought Jordan Pope bounced back through some adversity to close the game out. Came out in overtime, making a big shot and going hard all night."

***Q: How did going through the adversity of getting the inbounds, avoiding ten seconds, things like that affect your team?***

**RT:** "You know what's funny? We haven't had a problem with pressure all year long. We've done a great job handling pressure and getting the ball inbounds. Maybe all the way back to Oklahoma, at Oklahoma, we struggled to get the ball inbounds. I found that where we had teams try to deny us getting the ball inbounds we have no problem."

"And getting the ball on the floor. We knew they were going with the one two, two one, and if we worked with it with their team press offense. Just bring the ball and look forward. Don't be hesitant. Attack around turn, but again, we stuck with it. Found a way to get here."

***Q: I thought your team did a great job of limiting second chance opportunities, what did you see in that aspect of the game?***

**RT:** "It's something they do in the wealth of strength of their team in terms of they've got good physical bodies over there, and they rebound extremely well. Shoot a lot of three's, we also did a good job at the three-point line tonight. Really good job defending the three-point line, and was also able to out rebounded them."