

## **2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes**

### **No. 25 Mississippi State at Arkansas – March 8, 2025**

#### **Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans**

***Q: Can you take us through the end of the game, and did you get the look that what you wanted for your team on the offensive end?***

**CJ:** “Yeah, they ran what we drew up. It’s got multiple options. I think it’s about the third time we’ve ran it this year all in recent games: twice today and once against Texas. It’s not like it’s been game planned that much, which is nice to have at the end of the game.”

“That’s all you can ask for. We had two shots on the rim, pretty close range for when it’s a one-point game. The worst part about it in a personal way for me was the angle I had when RJ Melendez shot the ball. I would’ve told you that ball was going in when it left his hand. It was the perfect angle, and he used the backboard. I was like, ‘It’s in.’ That was a pretty emotional point whatever seconds it was that it lasted.”

“I just feel awful for our team. These kids were on the road in obviously a tough place to play. We had some struggles, and we got ourselves down pretty good. They found a way to stick together and give themselves a chance to win the game.”

***Q: What was going through your mind when RJ Melendez took the last shot?***

**CJ:** “Well, some of our bench thought it was in, and maybe they celebrated a bit too early. To my right, I noticed a couple of bodies moving. What do you do? You certainly have to play better earlier. That’s what we just talked about, that we’re not consistent enough for long stretches.”

“I know it’s the end of the year, and you want to be playing your best. There are no excuses at all, and we understand that. We felt good about it all day, even when we were down. They kept fighting and scratching. You know how it goes when you’ve got a big lead, especially it home. It starts to dissipate away, and there starts to be some hushed tones and some pressure involved.”

“I thought [Arkansas guard D.J.] Wagner hit obviously a huge shot there with the three-ball there [late shot clock in the last minute]. He was terrific. I mean, arguably for me, he was so good at least for me in the games I’ve watched. That was his best game that he’s played. I thought [Arkansas forward Jonas] Aidoo, we’ve played against him before [at Tennessee]. He had a really good game. We had a hard time with him. He had 21 [points] and 10 [rebounds]. He just had a really solid game.”

***Q: Is there anything you can do to stop D.J. Wagner from getting in the paint especially late in the game?***

**CJ:** “He’s very physical, and he’s got a great frame. He’s strong, and he’s experienced now. He’s played 60-something SEC games. He was a highly recruited regarded kid coming out of high school. Now, with his body changing to go along with the strength and the experience, he’s very confident in getting downhill.”

“In the end to be honest with you on that last play, our whole deal was once he gets it to just basically back off. We know he made the three, but we were trying to get him to bounce it. Then, at that point, just back off. It’s hard to keep him in front, and it’s hard not to foul him. He’s so aggressive, and he just throws that body at you. Unfortunately, that’s not what they wound up doing. Obviously, they threw it to Aidoo.”

***Q: I thought the start of the second half was the difference in the game. Were they doing anything differently in the beginning of the second half?***

**CJ:** "I don't think so. They were in foul trouble just like we were. Both teams were in foul trouble, and both teams managed it to the point where no one got disqualified. I thought [Arkansas forward Trevon] Brazile not being on the floor obviously hurt them [in the first half]. Then, he made those few threes in the second half. He's really improved in that part of his game. That's not what he was known for up until recently. He got in a nice groove [early in the second half] where he was 3-for-5 from three. He too had a really good game with 11 [points] and 11 [rebounds]."

***Q: You ran a play where Riley Kugel hit a three pointer, was the play designed for Riley because it started to curl and came off of a second curl?***

**CJ:** "It's something we haven't run all year long ... He's supposed to curl it, but we told him if you feel like you feel like you can break it off and bump to the drift on the ball side because of how the defender is playing you. Basically, at that point, that's what he did. That was a big shot in the game."

***Q: How are you going to maximize the time you have to prepare before you go play at the SEC Tournament in Nashville?***

**CJ:** "Again, I've said this repeatedly this year. I know today's results weren't what anyone wanted whether it be our fan base, our players or our coaches. Nobody wants to win any more than we do. I've got continued confidence in this group, maybe even more so after this game than I did going into the game, just because of the way they competed when it was go time when the chips were down. A lot of teams could've easily limped away."

"Our huddles were really good. I thought our staff did an excellent job on their own of just trying to keep the kids motivated and continuing to fight, to scratch and to claw. As all the old coaches would tell you, there's always more time than you think. We've got to go down there, and we'll have a bounce in our step. We've been there and done that. We've won games down there every year. Our goal is going to be to go down there and to be playing for a championship. We'll regroup and be ready to go by Wednesday."

***Q: Your teams at Mississippi State and New Mexico State has been good in conference tournament and in the postseason. Do your teams have any different kinds of preparation going into the postseason?***

**CJ:** "Not a whole lot other than being very mindful of not having weary legs. Certainly, practice is where you want to get better, right? Coaches always talk about practice, practice, practice. Coaches like practice because they can stop it and feel like they can make their team better. How much better are you getting now? Is it diminishing returns because of the weary legs and the weary minds? Not having them in the gym quite as long, which we've actually been doing recently. I think that's something especially when you're going down to a place where, hopefully, you're playing on consecutive days. You've got to be really careful about how you practice, how you lift, and how much film you watch heading into the conference tournament."