

2024-25 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes
Mississippi State vs. Georgia State – November 8, 2024

Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: At the 16 or 17-minute mark [of the second half], you made a complete lineup change. What did you tell them coming onto the floor?

CJ: “It was a horrific start. I’m obviously disappointed with the group that was on the floor to start the second half, even though it was the same group that started the first half. Trust me, I understand you might want to take your foot off the gas with a big lead, but you develop bad habits that way. Every coach in America tries to guard against it.”

“I was just surprised. Unfortunately, in my haste to sub them out, we didn’t have a four man. I was told that by someone on the bench, and my response was, ‘I don’t care.’ We had five new players on the court. And actually, they turned the tide. They kind of righted the ship and got the score back to where it was. We stuck with that group for a while. They did a nice job.”

Q: These guys seemed to feed off the idea of playing unselfish basketball. Is that something you like to see?

CJ: “We’ve been impressed with them since they’ve arrived and got going into more five-on-five this summer, leading into the fall. They were unselfish. We didn’t really have to preach it that much. For whatever reason, it has been an undercurrent for this group. Every coach in America loves when they see that. Everybody talks about chemistry and liking each other, but these guys do. You can tell by the way they compete on the court, sharing the ball and cheering for one another.”

“Certainly, when you’re 2-0, you haven’t had any stress yet. Who knows when it gets hard, but the initial impression has been really good that way in terms of sharing it. I tell them that we have some talent. We have more talent than we’ve had overall and more options. You don’t have to force it in the middle of a shot clock. You don’t have to make those plays. There are other guys waiting on the wings that can play with you.”

Q: Riley Kugel looked very confident tonight. Did you feel that confidence?

CJ: “I’m not right very often. I told one of our coaches on Wednesday that he looked like he struggled [against West Georgia]. He didn’t have a very good outing, things didn’t go his way. He missed the first checkout of the game when he got in, and they nailed the three. I barked at him. He had a funky play where they called a travel, even though he didn’t. The ball bounced high on him. He took two steps, and he got rid of it because he knew he was going to travel or carry it. He did some things in that game that arched my eyebrows in a good way. He didn’t miss a check the rest of the game. He was 6-for-6. He sprinted back one time to break up a play and got a foul, but he had an effort. He gave max effort.”

“I felt really good about him going into the week, and I told one of the coaches that he is going to play better. He’s been practicing better and getting more comfortable. I’m happy for him. I know he was disappointed individually, but he didn’t show it in the locker room after the game. He was like everyone

else was. He's got a long way to go like we all do. He showed some signs tonight of what he's capable of for us."

Q: The guards were able to attack in the first half. Does that exemplify what you have said about having a more versatile backcourt?

CJ: "I wouldn't call any of our guards one-trick ponies. They're not just shooters. They can make shots, put the ball on the deck and they have some game off the bounce."

"What I love about them is they can create for each other. It's not just about creating for themselves. I thought Kanye Clary played more like he does in practice. He showed more of the dynamic ability that he has, more of the finished package that he has. He's really hard to keep in front."

"Our biggest issue is rebounding. We're not going to be the same that way. I promise you we're going to work our tails off to be better at it every single outing. We knew going in that this team was going to challenge them on the defensive boards. That's who they were in the first game, and we knew it. Without looking at the tape, giving up 18 offensive rebounds and winning by that margin is hard to believe for me."

Q: Cameron Matthews played well off the bench. What was that conversation with him like?

CJ: "We didn't have a conversation about it. They come down with about 11 minutes left until the game, and that's when they find out who is starting. That's the way we've always done it for the most part. I had explained to everybody that was going to be the case. I don't know yet who will start in our next game, but he [Matthews] handled it like a pro. He handled it like a veteran. He wasn't fazed by it. He came out of the gate and played really well. The positive about it is he didn't have two quick fouls."

Guards Kanye Clary and Riley Kugel

Q: I guess in a perfect world that's kind of how this offense can roll with so many guys getting into double digits and then being able to dish the ball like you guys did, is that kind of what you all hope to see every night?

KC: "Yeah, when everybody is touching the ball and getting good looks. Everybody's contributing to a good team win. It's always a blessing."

Q: "I think it was around the 17-or 16-minute mark where you guys came off the bench. They basically did a line change. He took out five stars and brought in five stars. What did Coach Jans say to you guys in that moment as you're getting ready to go into the game?"

RK: "He said to get the energy back rolling and start to get it back up to how we ended the first half, and that's what we did."

Q: Well, it's always good to get 100 points in a game, how did it feel to get a dunk for the 100th point?

RK: "I didn't know it. I sat down on the bench and looked at the Jumbotron, but it was fun to be a part of it."

Q: Kanye, two different nights, two different starting lineups. We talked about it in the offseason too, but this team can go forward with no selfish attitudes or egos. What have you seen from the first two nights with so many different guys starting?

KC: "I think that it just shows how deep we are and how much talent we have. Honestly, everybody's been very good. We're happy, we celebrate each other's success, and we just want to win. We know that's our goal, and that's what we try to do each night."

Q: Riley, you look like you had a lot of confidence in your shot tonight when you're both inside and outside the line, was that the case? Did you just feel good shooting the ball tonight?"

RK: "Yeah, I'd like to say it's just because I came out a little earlier than usual for my warmup routine. My shot was just feeling good throughout the whole day. I was just confident."

Q: Talk about rebounding tonight, you outrebounded by one, I know coaches made that a point of emphasis."

KC: "The coaches have been harping on that since the season started, even days back in the summer. We know we have smaller guards. So, we have to work together as a team and rebound."

Q: Was there an emphasis to go inside tonight? I think Monday night you had a lot of three pointers, but tonight, most of the three's came in the second half. Were you all intent on attacking inside?"

KC: "I wouldn't say we were intent on attacking side, but we just saw how the game was going. They were giving our big men an easy target to get it into them. Coach says, 'Remember, when they have a flat back, give him the ball,' and we did it tonight. They produced."

Q: Coach Jans talked a lot about it this summer and in practice about how he wants his team to go fast. Obviously, you can't do it all the time, but when it's there, he wants you to take advantage of it. How much can this team excel?

RK: "Playing fast is always good, especially if you got eight, nine and 10 guys that can all do it and want to pick each other up. It's like we feed off each other's energy. It's like you could throw any lineup out there for us, and it won't be a bad problem. I feel like it benefits us at a faster pace than what you're used to last year."

KC: "Me, not really, I played in the backcourt with another great guard [at Penn State]. I'm used to pushing tempo and trying to change the game. So, I love it a lot and especially with better, even more talented players here, it's a very good feeling."