

2025-26 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. Auburn – March 11, 2026

State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: Chris, that big run that Auburn had in the second half, how did you see it unfold? What went wrong in those moments?

CJ: “Yeah, I thought the end of the first half was not what we needed. It was back and forth the majority of the first half. Then, we got up 10 with, I don't know, two and a half, three minutes left in the first half. We didn't score, we didn't score. They ended [the half on a] 7-0. We played 2-for-1 when we had the opportunity. Josh got in a tough situation in that right corner opposite our bench and had the turnover. We just didn't take advantage of the situation very well.”

As you well know, we talked a lot at halftime about resetting. We've had some rough second halves, especially defensively. We came out the first four minutes and were pretty good. Then, it just started slowly getting away from us. We had a stretch where – this isn't accurate, I'm sure – but we had four turnovers in like six possessions. I remember all the turnovers and who committed them. All that, in my brain. I don't know if it was five possessions, six possessions or seven possessions. To me, that was turning of the tide. We got it back close when they had a little bit of a lead. We fought back. We had that stretch of turnovers. To me, that's kind of where the separation happened. We never really had a fighting chance [during] the last three, four minutes of the game.”

Q: It seemed like Auburn played with a lot of pace, specifically in the transition in the back court. How tough was it establishing yourself defensively through the transitions?

CJ: “Yeah, they're a very fast-paced transition offensive team. Certainly, we were well aware of that heading into the game. They turn turnovers into buckets quickly. Sometimes, when our guards drive it, they get all the way to the paint make or miss. Sometimes, especially when they miss or one of them falls down, it puts a lot of pressure to get back and trying to stay matched, especially with a team as athletic and fast as Auburn. They definitely took some advantage of that this afternoon.”

Q: What do you feel like was the biggest difference in the first half and the second half?

CJ: “Obviously, there was a big scoring margin difference, but I felt like we couldn't score at the level we needed to score against their offense. They had got it going. I really believe, maybe I'll feel different when I watch it [the film], that stretch of turnovers was costly. It was right when we were having a lot of momentum. It was changing, and the momentum was changing. We kind of gave it back to them with the decisions that we made. It wasn't one guy. It was four different situations. I really felt like that was the biggest difference in the game.”

Q: Have you had any kind of internal conversations with potentially playing in the NIT or other post-season tournaments at this point?

CJ: “No, we'll not be playing in any postseason tournaments that I'm aware of.”

Q: Looking at the season as a whole, where do you think some of the issues were that you had to not get back to the NCAA tournament?

CJ: “Yeah, I mean, it's a long story. Not going to bore you with the details. There's a lot that goes on in any college basketball program. You start the first week of June and end somewhere in March. It's a long season, and we struggled out the gate. That's been our secret sauce since we've been here, in my opinion, is we've had really good non-conference schedules and results going into the SEC that have put us in position to have the metrics and the record and everything that's required to get in the NCAA Tournament. We knew it was going to be an uphill battle internally as a coaching staff.”

"We started off 2-0 [in the SEC] with the big wins out the gate at Texas and Oklahoma. Then, we couldn't sustain it. We just couldn't sustain it. We had a hard time for different reasons and for different reasons throughout the season. Obviously, we're disappointed in the results. It's not what anybody from the coaching staff, myself, the administration, the fan base and the people that love Bulldog basketball had in store. That's where the season ended."

Q: Auburn had four players in double figures. Your team had two. Would you have liked to have seen more production offensively point-wise from your other players?

CJ: "Absolutely, I wish we made every shot. I wish we had six or seven guys in double figures. I thought [Kevin] Overton was a huge, a huge shot in the arm for them. We were talking about him in some timeouts as the game was unfolding about how his shot looked and how he was obviously shooting at a high level. Even after that we lost track of him on an out-of-bounds play, I thought that was a big shot. But yeah, they were very balanced today."

"We obviously had Josh [Hubbard] and Jayden [Epps] who carried the scoring load for us. In a lot of our games, that's been the case. Certainly, you want more guys joining the column, but that's the way it was for a lot of our games this year."

Guards Josh Hubbard and Jayden Epps

Q: Jayden, you were ahead early in the second half, they had the big run. What went wrong in those moments?

JE: "I feel like we had a stretch where we turned the ball over a little bit. It kind of set us back. I feel like we still fought back, but they went on a run. We kind of tried to get on a run. Like Coach [Jans] told us in the locker room, anytime you turn the ball over on this type of stage and get down like that, it's hard to kind of fight back from."

Q: Josh, you had the big game against Auburn last month. Did you notice them defending you any differently this game?

JH: "I would say they were a lot more physical on and off the ball. They were switching more and throwing different looks at me. So, I saw a little bit of everything, but I feel like we had a good game plan offensively by adjusting to everything."

Q: Josh, have you made any decisions at this point about returning next season?

JH: "Not at all. I was just so focused on the 40 minutes today. Just trying to get a win, survive and advance. I just love competing with these guys, especially this guy to my right [Jayden Epps]. We've been competing ever since day one in the summer. It's just all been love. I'm sad to have to end like this. It's heartbreaking ... I feel like we bonded so much this year to where we created something special forever that will just never end."

Q: Josh, Auburn looked very much in control around the perimeter. How difficult was it stopping that back court, specifically Kevin Overton for the Tigers?

JH: "He definitely got hot. After one went in, the rim just looked a lot bigger. One of them was my fault, for sure. I was kind of the start of it. That's just the game of basketball, you're wishing you could go back. Where you're in it, you just have to play with no regrets. That's definitely one moment I wish I could just go back and change. But yeah, he had a heck of a game. He's a heck of a player. He has terrific players surrounded by him to where it makes it tougher to guard them offensively."

Q: Josh, where do you think this season maybe went wrong? Trying to get back in the NCAA tournament, where do you think you had some of these issues this season?

JH: "We were dealing with a lot of injuries early, and we had a tough non-conference schedule. We had some great games in our résumé. We started in the SEC great. A lot of games, especially early in the SEC, are like gold. Like I said earlier, some of the games that we know we should have won, you wish you could go back and change some things. Yeah, I feel like we still had a competitive season and things like that."

Q: Jayden, you've been a primary scorer all season. How did the flow of the game go to you offensively, was there a struggle getting into rhythm in the second half?

JE: "Auburn threw a lot of different looks at us this game especially us guards. I feel like we were just trying to get in the flow of the game. Our team around us, they did their best to help us do that. It was just a night where maybe the ball didn't go in as much as we wanted to. Like I said, Auburn, great team. They throw a lot of different good looks at us. Yeah, they were better tonight."