

2025-26 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes Mississippi State vs. North Alabama – November 5, 2025

Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: What do you think that difference was with your team being down by nine and to flip the game with a 15-0 run in the second half?

CJ: “We fully expected them to come out and try to punch us in the face and play really hard. I got a lot of respect for Coach Pujol, I’ve known him for a long, long time. They won 24 games last year and won their league. They’re picked to win their league this year. As coaches, we expected them to challenge us. They aren’t going to not show up.”

“In the first half, it was going fine I thought. Then, just all of the sudden, the momentum didn’t go our way. I think we were up by one at the half. The biggest challenge that we faced was we were down 50-42, and you could feel it. I didn’t call a timeout. I’m sure people wanted me to call a timeout out, but I didn’t. They figured it out. I just thought we had a group of players out there that just kind of changed the tide a little bit with their defense, their rebounding and their running. They just really locked in defensively. To me, that’s when there was that stretch there. It wasn’t too long after until we took the lead. Then, in the end, I thought our depth and our conditioning wore them out a little bit. We were talking about that in our huddles. We kept coming, and we were able to pull away in the end.”

Q: Ja’Borri McGhee did some moves and impressive things off the bench. What did you see in his performance, and did it surprise you in any way?

CJ: “No, I’m not surprised at all. He’s a big strong guard, and he’s an SEC athlete. He’s played college basketball for three years. He’s got a lot of pride, he’s got pride in his game, and he’s got pride on the defensive end. He’s been very coachable, and he’s been good in the three outings that we had. Obviously, this is the only one that counts, but he just looks like he’s ready to go on the court when it’s gametime. As long as he keeps doing that, he’s going to have a lot of minutes for us.”

Q: You mentioned that group off the bench gave your life especially at the start of the second half, Ja’Borri McGhee is part of that but as well as Sergej Macura who’s leading the team in rebounds. What have you seen from those players who are spark plug guys?

CJ: “Well, we’re still trying to figure out our team. We have a long way to really form our full personality. I’ve been talking about that with you folks and to other people that I’m close with. It is just what it is. With the newness of college basketball, I think there will be a lot of coaches talking about it just trying to find their way and establishing an ID whatever that becomes.”

“Certainly, I know what I want that to be, but that doesn’t mean that it’s actually going to get there. This was a step in the right direction. I mean, when you’re down at home in the home opener like that, it could go south in a hurry. Our huddles were off the chart. Shawn Jones stepped up verbally, and Josh Hubbard stepped up. All we talked about was defending, rebounding and just playing together. They were echoing things that they heard from me, and I thought that was a really, really good sign.”

“Like I said, we’re in the infant stages of forming what we’re going to be and who we’re going to be. In the first half and this isn’t an excuse and people can poke holes in it, we had a scripted sub pattern which I don’t do very often. I really was struggling mentally with who needed to play, and I wanted to give everyone an opportunity. So, we did that. We had a couple of lineups that probably weren’t our best, but it gave guys some opportunities to get their feet wet if you will and see how they looked out there on the court. Then, obviously, some game film for everyone. In the second half, that wasn’t our plan. We didn’t do that, and we didn’t sub quite as liberally in that second half.”

Q: Paul asked Josh if he was more proud of the 27 points or the eight eight assists. He said the eight assists because he wanted to point that out to you. I was wondering how did you feel about the way he ran the offense and found his teammates?

CJ: “He should have said eight assists and zero turnovers, which is more impressive than anything. You guys see him. I mean you don’t see him as much as I do. Sometimes, I think when you don’t see someone for a long time, you notice the difference more than me because it’s an everyday thing.”

“That’s what I’ve been most impressed with is just his pace in the game. He’s obviously more explosive than he was. He’s driving the ball a little bit more and getting to the line. Obviously tonight, he got to the line a bunch. Just his pace and picking his spots. Then, the attention to detail defensively has been really, really good. He was great. Obviously, in the beginning of the game, he was the one that got us off to a decent start. Then, he hit some shots there down the stretch to get the separation.”

Q: Jamarion Davis-Fleming gives you 20 minutes. He has two blocks and does a good job defending without fouling. What did you see from his performance tonight?

CJ: Yeah, he has been the biggest surprise of camp, if you will. I told Coach [Richard] Williams in the radio [interview]. When you coached, you didn’t have them in June, July, August or September. You had to wait until October 15th [to start practicing]. So, freshmen were still freshmen when they got to October 15th. But, now they get all that training. They get exposed to everything that’s going on, and they get so much more opportunity to have early growth.”

“That’s what Jamar’s done. He’s taken advantage of the opportunity. He’s completely changed his look, and how he goes about doing his business from the first week of June until the first week of November. The results are that he’s on the floor. If he keeps doing what he’s doing, and he keeps practicing the way he’s practicing, and he keeps being as coachable as he’s been, he’ll continue to do that. You all can see that he’s got a live body. He makes athletic plays. He plays right, and hopefully he’ll carve out a niche for us this year.”

Q: We talked to you previous to this, you stressed that couple things you wanted coming out of the preseason was taking care of the basketball and rebounding. Do you feel like you checked both those boxes tonight?

CJ: “Yeah, obviously, I would take seven turnovers every game you play the rest of the games I get to coach in. It’s a magnificent number, and it’s something that we’ve been talking a lot about with our team, especially since the Houston game because we had so many.”

“They’re athleticism, their intensity and their two on the ball wasn’t what Houston was. That’s no disrespect to North Alabama, but it’s just not anyone really does it quite like that. So, that was a great learning experience for us. Certainly, we’ve a lot of games to see if that remains to be true.”

“But yeah, the rebounding I thought was good all game long. A little bit better in the first half than it was in the second half, but the numbers came out pretty good for us. We had some individuals that had some really good number. Achor [Achor] got eight with the minutes he played. Then, Quincy [Ballard] had seven, Shawn [Jones Jr.] had nine and Sergej [Macura] had 12. Everybody that played except Dellquan [Warren] got a rebound.”

Q: Coach, you talked about Dellquan Warren being hurt early in the summer and coming back from that injury. Was there a point this summer where you saw that he has really worked on his game and gained some confidence?

CJ: Yeah, I love coaching Dellquan. He’s got an awesome approach. He’s about what we’re about since he’s been here. We’ve loved coaching him every day. He wants to get better. He’s got great body language and great responses. He works on his game. He cares about his game like everyone on our team or across college basketball, he’s got strengths and weaknesses obviously.”

“I thought the corner three he made was a big confidence booster for him. With him for me, every time I look at a practice or a game, I’m going how many turnovers did he have? Because he tends to get aggressive, but it isn’t really for himself. He likes to play for others, which is awesome, but he gets himself in trouble sometimes that way. So, if he keeps taking care of that ball and keeps being a consistent defender which he has been for us. It was a little unlike him in the second half, he gave up a couple of drives, but he’ll be in the rotation for sure.”

Mississippi State Guard Josh Hubbard and Forward Sergej Macura

Q: What was the difference in that 15-0 run to spark that comeback in the second half?

JH: “We just got adjusted to the game. We watched some clips, during halftime, things that they were beating us on. We adjusted to it and just took off from there. We played off of our grittiness, and our toughness in the second half and just ran up the score.”

Q: What was it like playing in front of the crowd?

SM: “For a first home game, it was amazing. I really liked the crowd, the way they connected with us, and the way we were feeding off of their energy. It was just amazing. The 12 rebounds, it’s just a mirror reflection of the energy of the team and the crowd. We tried to play hard, and they [the crowd] helped us do that.”

Q: With all of the new guys, how was it being the guy kind of holding things down?

JH: “It was fun. The Hump was like no other. I’m glad that we got to experience this. Everybody was excited prior to the game. So, we knew that we had a job to complete. We were just excited to be out there and play against somebody else. We’re just happy that the season is here.”

Q: A couple opportunities to throw down a dunk, the student section was really excited for you. What was it like feeling that energy and the students reacting to you?

SM: "First of all, I want to say that I don't usually miss dunks. My teammates know that, that's why they are trolling me now in the locker room. The first one was nerves, the second one was nerves too, I don't know. It happens, probably not going to happen again. It's the first game, what can I say? I'm trying to get a feel for it."

Q: One of the things Coach Jans was stressing every time we talked to him was cut down the turnovers and increase the rebounding. Do you think that you all succeeded at that tonight?

JH: "I feel like we got better at that in the second half. I feel like our ceiling is even higher, and that we can do even better. We just have to learn from this. To start like we did in the second half from the beginning of the game, we have to do it the whole game. I feel like our ceiling is higher, and we can improve from that."

Q: Ja'Borri McGhee's athleticism really stood out tonight. What do you think of his first performance here at Mississippi State?

JH: "He's going to remember it for sure. He showed a little bit of everything on both ends. I'm just so glad that he's here, that he's a part of this team and that he had fun. He almost got a crazy lob. I'm just glad that his athleticism got onto the floor tonight."

Q: Josh, are you more proud of your eight assists or your 27 points?

JH: "I think I'm going to go with eight assists just so I can brag to Coach Jans about it."

Q: I know he was hurt for most of the early summer, but did you kind of notice Dellquan Warren and him starting to gain his confidence?

JH: "Most definitely, Dellquan brings a spark to us and to the team. It's what we need. In a couple stretches when he was in, he gave us a spark when we were struggling early. His competitiveness, he's an everyday guy. He's probably the most everyday guy that we have on the team. So, I'm proud of him from where he's came, and his improvement on his game. His ceiling is much higher as well."

Q: You guys faced some adversity tonight, especially in the second half. What was the message to the guys when you were trailing?

JH: "Coming into the game, we knew that this was their Super Bowl. It kind of hit us a little bit in reality when we were in the moment, but it was good for us to experience that a little bit. Obviously, I didn't want to lose the game but just to experience a little adversity so in future games we know what to expect and how to adjust to it. We just have to keep it moving. Like [Coach] Jans says, the next play, that's the biggest thing. I feel like in the second half we got that on."

North Alabama Coach Tony Pujol

Q: What's your initial reaction to the way your team played tonight?

TP: "I thought our guys were really locked in and focused. At the beginning of the game, I thought that Mississippi State does what they do right. They are just such a well-coached team. Coach Jans does a great job, great staff. They make it difficult for you to score. I think he came out and really did a good job of taking away a lot of things from us, but I think our guys responded really well. I felt that they were locked in and really wanted to make sure that the offense just worked the way it worked. I thought they did a tremendous job offensively and defensively."

Q: Probably the biggest question coming in was going to be guard play. If those three [Jefferson, DE Kovachich, and Patton] can do that against the best guards in college basketball, it's got to be an initial great reaction.

TP: "That was always the thing going into the year, how were the guards going to respond? We felt like we had a solid frontcourt coming back, with Dallas, Donte and Corneilous. Everybody thought that we have that covered, but what are the guard going to do?"

"I'll tell you, these guys have been working really hard since June. There's been times where you can see, during practices and even in our intrasquad scrimmages, the way these guys compete, I think they are going to be just fine. They just have to accept their role and go out there and perform."

Q: Corneilous Williams with eight points, 13 rebounds. He had some highlight reel dunks yet again. Seeing Neil do this against a team with multiple guys 6'10" or taller, it's a great start for him this year.

TP: "100 percent. When it comes to him, he's one of these guys that just works extremely hard out on the court. He's relentless, and that's why he has the success that he has. He finished the night with 13 boards, six offensive against a team like this. As you can see, this is a team that across the board, you have 7-footers. Then, you have 6-11, 6-10 all the way across the board. For him to have that type of success against those guys just kind of shows his tenacity and what he can do."