

2023-24 Mississippi State Men's Basketball Postgame Quotes
Mississippi State vs. Arizona State – November 8, 2023
Barstool Sports Invitational

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Jans

Q: What do you think of the way your team closed out the first half to gain momentum?

CJ: "I was fairly happy with how we ran offense in the first half. Certainly, Trey Fort jumped up and made some shots. It makes everybody look good, but we certainly had some possessions that weren't great. But our effectiveness, our spacing and what we're trying to accomplish was pretty good for the first game out of the shoot. Certainly, in the second half, it wasn't very good. That last 10 minutes took forever, but sometimes that happens when you have a lead like that."

Q: What did Trey Fort show leading into the game for you to make the decision for him to start?

CJ: "We didn't make it until the last minute, to be perfectly honest with you. We discussed it a little bit here and there, but you'll have to ask him. I've got no idea if it gave him confidence or not, but that was one morsal we're hoping that would happen. We told him early in warmups that he was going to do that, but we had discussions about a lot of guys. There were about four guys we talked about. We got lucky and picked the right one today."

Q: How much is the mix and matching of combinations for rotation guys part of what you want to do early in non-conference?

CJ: "We're always playing that many guys. I like to have comradery amongst the team. I believe it helps the chemistry of the team. Everyone does it different. Some guys are locked into 7-8 [guys]. My best teams have always been the ones where we've got a lot of options, and we've got a lot of depth. I love it for practice. I love it for what we're going through now because of the injuries. If they can move the needle, and that's what I tell them. If you can move the needle, we're going to find you minutes in the game. I think that keeps guys motivated too."

Q: What does it say about these JUCO [junior college] guys [Jaquan Scott and Trey Fort] being able to make an impact on this level right away?

CJ: "They're hungry. They've got something to prove. Most of my guys and my staff have spent some time there [at the junior college level]. We're not having meetings saying we've got to go find some JUCO guys. That isn't the case. We're just trying to find the right fits for what we need, regardless of where they're playing. If it's the [transfer] portal or the JUCO or the prep school or the high school or whatever it is."

"I'm happy for both of them. You know, Jaquan didn't play a ton of minutes [tonight]. He didn't have the huge explosion that Trey did, but he played well in the Southern Miss charity exhibition game."

Q: What do you think about the players embracing the mentality that they can win even with the roster having injuries?

CJ: "I've never addressed it. I've never talked about it other than when it first happened. We just needed to kind of regroup and set the table, but I'm glad they are. I'm glad it's motivated them. But for us, it's more to figure out how we need to play and getting the right five on the court. Playing different lineups with Gai [Chol] getting some minutes. Then, certainly playing small ball with Cam [Cameron Matthews], but I'm glad to hear it's motivating for them. It should be."

Q: What do you like about what signee Dellquan Warren is bringing to the team next year?

CJ: We're excited that he's joined our basketball family. He's a high energy kid and plays with a burst. He's got speed. I love the fact that he's a pass-first guy, but he also can score the ball. He's a lefty. I love lefty point guards, lefty bigs. He's one of those guys. It's a little different playing against them. He's got speed, but what really impressed me were his hands. He's got quick hands, and he gets his hands on a lot of balls. He's got a high-compete level. So, we're excited that he's joining us, and we can't wait for next year for him to be with us."

Guard Trey Fort and Forward Jimmy Bell Jr.

Q: Where did the confidence from three-point territory come from tonight to keep shooting?

TF: "Honestly, I've always had that confidence. I don't see the misses. That's what I have been doing my whole life. I've been a scorer, and I've been a shooter. I don't think about the misses, and I feel the next one will fall. I believe all of them are going in."

Q: What was it like when your shots were starting to fall, and you were able to close out that first half out strong?

TF: "It was very exciting, especially with my team. We're just together, and we cheer everybody on. When you have them [your teammates] behind you and hit a shot, they tell you to keep going. It's a different type of feeling."

Q: What does it say about you being a junior college guy to be able to come in and make an instant impact?

TF: "We're tough, and we're made like that. It's something that we've always worked for. This is where we want to be, where we work to be and pray to be."

Q: When did you find out you were going to start the game, and what was your reaction?

TF: "Two minutes before. We walked in after warmups. I saw my name on the board, and I'm always ready. I was locked in from the start, it's nothing new."

Q: Where will you put that MVP trophy when you get back to Starkville?

TF: "It's got to be seen. It's got to be in the front room. Everybody has to know about this one. It's just one though. We're going to keep going."

Q: Jimmy, how have you handled the Tolu Smith injury situation and just tried to be yourself out on the court?

JBj: "Tolu [Smith] is a big part of the team. When I came in, [Coach] Jans recruited me and told me about Tolu coming back. Him being hurt is a bit of a downfall for our team, but I don't try and come in to be like anybody else. I do my job and do what I've got to do to the best of my ability."

Q: Where do you feel like you will be able to impact this team most?

JBj: "Really just being a big body on the paint on defense. Offensive rebounding, clearing out space on seals, letting my guards get layups and things like that. I do things that don't show up on the stat sheet all the time, and I'm proud of that."

Q: Is there a chip on the team's shoulder that even without Tolu Smith you can still win games?

JBj: Once he got hurt, I knew everybody had to step up. Not just me, but everybody had to step up. We've got veterans on the team. So, we've got a lot of leadership in the locker room. He'll be back soon, and we'll be even stronger than we are now as a team."

Q: *How excited were you guys to finally get on the court after seeing other team playing the last two days?*

JBJ: "We've been waiting since that Southern Miss game. We've just been waiting for somebody else. We've been beating up on each other in practice, and we're waiting for somebody else."