

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

**Mississippi State Bulldogs**

**Coach Chris Jans**

**Josh Hubbard**

**Claudell Harris Jr.**

Postgame Press Conference

Mississippi State 91, LSU 62

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Mississippi State. We'll ask coach for some general thoughts on the game, then we'll take questions.

CHRIS JANS: The game was back and forth the first, I don't know, half of the first half. We found some footing. Obviously had some guys make some shots, especially to my left. Had a great margin at halftime. Anytime you're in that situation, I can't imagine any coach in America not having a similar speech to their guys about the first five minutes is going to be crucial. The score is going to get out of hand or they're going to fight back in the game.

Unfortunately for us, it was the latter. That didn't make us very happy. We were just sloppy with the ball. We had two inbound turnovers that just can't happen at this point in the season. This many games under your belt.

Fortunately they regrouped. We had some leaders step up in some huddles and kind of set the tone for everybody. We were able to play better till the final buzzer went off.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Josh, midway through the first half, the lead is two points, then the team doesn't allow a field goal for the rest of the 10 minutes of the first half. What did you see in that stretch?**

JOSH HUBBARD: Yeah, I feel like in that stretch, we were just playing Bulldog basketball, getting after the ball, getting deflections, getting defensive rebounds.

We've been preaching that ever since we got here. Like I



said earlier up there in the press, as long as we have that mindset just coming out defending, rebounding the ball, we can just be a scary team.

**Q. Claudell, there was another stretch similar to that in the second half where the defense clamped it up. Do you think that's what this defense looks like when it's playing at its best right now?**

CLAUDELL HARRIS JR.: Our defense is definitely good today. I wouldn't say it's at our best. We did make some defensive mistakes that we made up for with our athleticism.

But we're just going to watch the film, watch where we messed up and be better tomorrow.

**Q. You're playing in the first round, meaning if you want to win this tournament, you win five games in five days. How much confidence does a 30-point win give you?**

JOSH HUBBARD: It's definitely motivating. Like you said, five games in five days ain't easy, but I feel like we're off to a good start. We were just motivated for this game. We just take it one day at a time. We don't look forward or look in the past, we just be where our feet are.

**Q. Josh, you had 30 points against LSU the first time, 26 tonight. Anything you see that makes it not easy but comfortable for you to score?**

JOSH HUBBARD: I mean, I was just taking what the defense gave me. Besides that, I don't know how to answer that question, to be honest (smiling). Just being out there having fun.

**Q. Josh, obviously when you're hitting threes, this offense can really reach its ceiling. What is the maximization, I guess, of this offense look like to you?**

JOSH HUBBARD: For us, it all starts on defense. Goes back to defense. How we get to the ball, get deflections, steals. That's when our at our best. That's how we

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maximize our offense.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse you guys. We'll continue with questions for Coach Jans.

**Q. In terms of the defense, things have been a little bit up and down last couple of months, weeks. Today 62 points. What did you just see from this team's defensive effort?**

CHRIS JANS: We had a long talk Monday before we started preparing for the SEC tournament as a whole, but certainly the LSU game was at the forefront.

Just talked about how disappointed I think all of us were in some of our recent games, especially on that side of the ball. Our last game against Arkansas, we scored 92 points and lost. That's not something that we've done a lot since we've arrived.

Really just tried to reset and get everyone to buy in and believe because myself to them, we've had great games, great stretches where we played at a high level on the defensive end, but for whatever reason we couldn't sustain it long enough and have that be our backbone.

That was the mantra, is that we were going to go back to the basics. We did a lot of defensive stuff, drills we hadn't done for months, to try to get everybody just mentally focused and understanding that if we're going to win games down here, it's got to start on that end of the floor.

The first half was really, really good. Second half was just okay. Giving up 24. After we settled in, I thought the first five, 10 minutes, we were just okay. The last 10 minutes it was some of our best defense we played all year long.

**Q. I think Cam had four steals in this game. Even when he's not scoring, he's impacting the game in a plethora of ways. What does he do for you to get you back to the defensive identity you want to have?**

CHRIS JANS: Yeah, he's our engine that way. Everyone that's really watched us play knows that he's a big steal guy. He creates steals for others, too, by getting a lot of deflections. He's our motor.

His energy level lifts everybody up. Not as good or confident, to be honest with you, on either end of the floor when he's not out there. But he's had some big games for us steal-wise. Obviously the stat sheet doesn't jump out at you. With him, you don't see what's going on in the huddles.

Even him talking to me, trying to get me under control a

little bit, which that doesn't happen very often with a player.

With him, I acknowledge that he's got our utmost respect as a staff of being here with us the whole time that we've arrived. He's emerged into obviously a great player and even a better leader.

**Q. Plenty of people know what this team can do defensively. To score 91 with only one player scoring in double figures. What does that say about the depth of your offense?**

CHRIS JANS: Again, I wasn't happy with the Arkansas game. No one was. But there's a little part of me that's coached myself a little bit that, hey, if we can continue to play offense like that and share the ball and have multiple guys take some pressure off of Josh, which we did there, and then we did again today.

Certainly Josh had that amazing run in the first half. But other guys had some runs themselves and made some shots. We got out in transition and showed our athleticism.

You mentioned to those guys, and I get it, about five games in five days. We don't talk about that at all. It hasn't been mentioned. We're trying to win the next game.

That's all we're focused on. We don't talk anything but that. If you take care of that one, you'll have another opportunity. That's the way you have to approach it.

**Q. Back to the defensive stretch in the first half, you said you think it was one of the best you've seen from this team this season. When that happens, what is going well with the defense?**

CHRIS JANS: I mean, it always starts with how you're guarding the ball. Usually most mistakes that lead to wide-open looks or even good looks for the offense, more often than not it goes back to a mistake that happened on the ball either just out of position, your footing was not right, you weren't into the ball, you weren't dictating, you were letting them kind of basically dictate how this catch was going to go.

That's a big thing for us, is to be on the ball and the right disposition and be the attacker, if you will, on defense. I felt like we had a stretch there where we were kind of running the show on defense. We were telling them this is the way it's going to be on this possession.

Hopefully our guys will feel good about that and have confidence to continue to do it.

**Q. What's it been like to go through this version of the SEC this season?**



CHRIS JANS: It's been awesome. Like, I'm on record saying it all fall. It's awesome for all of us for of the obvious reasons, right? Exposure, the attention the league is receiving. Love being a part of it.

When you're in December and you're looking at the metrics, you're like, wow, we're going to have so many opportunities. Not that we haven't the first two years, but it's obviously super sized this year with the quad games that everybody had, the opportunities that everybody had. Certainly there were nights when it wasn't so awesome when you didn't play well, you got beat by some amazing programs and teams that we had this year.

Hopefully it's going to help everybody once we get into post-season play because of the quality of competition that you play every single night.

**Q. There's a strong argument to be made it might be harder to win the SEC tournament than going to the Elite Eight or Final Four. What are your thoughts on that?**

CHRIS JANS: That's a great question. Unfortunately I haven't thought about that at all. Hopefully you should ask some of these other coaches and they can give you a better answer.

That's a lot. That's a lot. I understand the question, like I said, it makes a lot of sense. I'm going to stay focused on Missouri and trying to prepare for that particular game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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