

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Mississippi State Bulldogs

Coach Chris Jans

Jayden Epps

Josh Hubbard

Postgame Press Conference



Auburn 77, Mississippi State 61

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin with Mississippi State. We're going to go straight to the players for questions.

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

JAYDEN EPPS: 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. They went on a run. We kind of tried to get on a run.

Like Coach told us in the locker room, anytime you turn the ball over on this type of stage, 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?

JOSH HUBBARD: I would say they were a lot more physical on and off the ball. They were switching more, throwing different looks at me. So I saw a little bit of everything.

But I feel like we had a good game plan offensively, adjusting to everything, so...

Q. Coach, what would you say was your biggest indicator that you couldn't just get back to compete with Auburn?

THE MODERATOR: We're only doing player questions

first.

Q. Josh, have you made any decisions at this point about returning next season or what your future might be?

JOSH HUBBARD: 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. 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. You know, these guys have a bright future. I feel like we bonded so much this year to where we created something special forever that will just never end, so...

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?

JOSH HUBBARD: He definitely got hot. After one went in, the rim just looked a lot bigger. One of 'em was my fault, for sure. I was kind of the start of it. That's just the game of basketball, wishing you could go back. Where you're in it, you have to play with no regrets. That's definitely one moment 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, so...

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?

JOSH HUBBARD: Uhm... We were dealing with a lot of injuries early. 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

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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, so...

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?

JAYDEN EPPS: 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.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, you're dismissed. We'll continue with questions for Coach 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?

CHRIS JANS: Yeah, I thought the end of the first half was not what we needed. It was back and forth 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 7-0. We played two for one when we had the opportunity.

Josh got in a tough situation in that right corner opposite our bench, had the turnover. Just didn't take advantage of the situation very well.

As you well know, we talk a lot at halftime about resetting. We've had some rough second halves, especially defensively. We came out the first four minutes, was 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, and we never really had a fighting chance 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?

CHRIS JANS: 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 'em falls down, it puts a lot of pressure to get back, 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?

CHRIS JANS: Uhm... 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, that stretch of turnovers was costly. It was right when we were having a lot of momentum. It was changing, 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?

CHRIS JANS: No, we'll not be playing in any post-season 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?

CHRIS JANS: 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, end somewhere in March, it's a long season.

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 with the big wins out the gate at Texas and Oklahoma. Then we couldn't sustain it. We couldn't sustain it. We had a hard time for different reasons, 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, 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?

CHRIS JANS: Absolutely. I wish we made every shot. I wish we had six or seven guys in double figures.

I thought Overton was a huge, 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, 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 and Jayden who carried the scoring load for us. 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.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

CHRIS JANS: Thank you.

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