

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Mississippi State vs Baylor

Friday, March 21, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Lenovo Center

Mississippi State Bulldogs Chris Jans

Cameron Matthews

Josh Hubbard

Media Conference

Baylor - 75, Mississippi State - 72

THE MODERATOR: At this time, we're ready to start the Mississippi State press conference. I'd like to remind you to make sure your phones are on mute.

Coach, could you please start with an opening statement.

CHRIS JANS: Obviously disappointed with the results. Unfortunately, we dug ourselves a pretty big hole there in the second half. I knew our kids would continue to fight back and put themselves in position to have a half to be in a one-possession game.

Unfortunately, the ball or the call didn't go our way there late.

Q. Cam, y'all had a pretty sizable advantage inside, but they were able to get a lot of offensive rebounds. I think they had 15, a lot of second chance points. What were they doing well you think to get those second chance points and connect on those?

CAMERON MATTHEWS: They weren't really doing anything special. They just played tougher than us tonight. They just kind of punked us tonight. That's all it was.

Q. Josh, on that final play where Claudell shot the 3, was the shot designed or play designed for you? What did you kind of see on that sequence?

JOSH HUBBARD: It was a set drawn for really three options. Claudell had a good chance. I was coming off a stagger, so it was really whatever the defense gave us.



We just reacted to what they thrown at us.

Q. This just being your final Mississippi State game, the program's pretty clearly made a lot of progress since you've been here, with three straight NCAA Tournament experiences but unable to come away with a win. Where do you see this program right now in the future ahead as you depart?

CAMERON MATTHEWS: The program is just going to keep going up. They've got a great head coach here to my right, Coach Jans. They're going to get some guys next year and keep practicing hard, and hopefully next year we come up here and get a win next year.

Q. Cam, kind of on that point, looking back at your time here, you've had a lot of ups and downs, a lot more ups, I'm sure. How do you describe your time here? A guy in the middle of the transfer portal era sticking it out and staying with Mississippi State. Why was Mississippi State your choice for five years?

CAMERON MATTHEWS: First and foremost, I want to thank God for giving me the opportunity to play this great game of basketball. I want to thank all my past teammates and current teammates, Coach Howell and Coach Jans for believing in me.

I just feel as if Mississippi State, it just felt like home, real welcoming. The people, they're great fans, and I just wanted to stay home and have something to play for and be proud of.

Q. Josh, particularly with the turnovers, it seemed like that played a pretty big factor, especially in the first half. And then maybe you guys were able to clean it up a little bit as you chipped away at the lead. What did you see in that regard with the turnovers?

JOSH HUBBARD: They did great turning us over. They created energy and points off of it. Like you said, we had some bad turnovers in the first half. It was a little better in the second. We still had some silly ones. Yes, those are the ones you wish you could go back and just fix.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much. You're excused. You can go back to the locker room.



Q. Coach, as you're down three trying to tie it, I imagine the game plan was probably to get Josh a 3 the way he'd been playing. Can you tell us about that play call and why that didn't work out, I guess.

CHRIS JANS: Yeah, it had multiple options. It's a play that we put in not that long ago, to be honest with you. It's the first time we've ever run it exactly for this type of scenario where we had enough time to get one look and then a second look. It's just two ball screens.

We were dashing out of it and then trying to drag it and then bringing Josh behind the play after he handed the ball off and trying to get a heel-toe 3. Certainly at that point, you just never know how the other team is going to play it, but pretty early you could tell they weren't going to foul us. Internally, I thought we're going to get a shot. But unfortunately, it didn't go in.

Q. Cam said on the rebounding issues that they outplayed you all or they wanted it more than you all did. Were you surprised that they were able to have that success on the offensive boards that they did?

CHRIS JANS: They're a very good offensive rebounding team. Their numbers show that. The film showed it. So am I surprised? I don't know. Disappointed, because we certainly talked about it till we're blue in the face and showed the film. It was one of our major keys going into the game was to beat them up on the backboard.

That was what we talked about a lot in the first half was discrepancy and the amount of second chances they were getting. We kept telling them that our first shot defense had been good enough, but we weren't finishing the possession.

Again, you've got to give the Baylor team a bunch of credit for playing really hard and beating our checks and crashing the glass. It's not that we were surprised that they were doing that.

The other thing that we were disappointed in at halftime was we wanted to attack, attack, attack, and get in the paint and live in the paint and not settle early in possessions unless it was just a great rhythm, open 3 for you personally. I didn't feel like we did a good enough job with that. We were 7 for 10 from 2 in the first half. I think they had 20 paint touches, and we only had 9. That's just a really, really low number for us all year long, especially when we emphasized it heading into this particular game.

Because we just wanted to try to get inside of them and attack the goal and put 15 in tough situations to shield the

rim and put him in ball screens. I think he ended the half with maybe one foul and just didn't feel like we did a good enough job in the first half of doing that.

Q. You talked about how it's not necessarily a goal anymore for this program to make the NCAA Tournament, but to make it and win some games and go on a run in the NCAA Tournament. But to just kind of be in that same spot as you were last year and similar to two years ago, how kind of frustrating is that in this moment right now?

CHRIS JANS: That's a fair question, but let's be clear. Getting to the NCAA Tournament is still a goal for us every single year, and there's a lot of teams out there that would trade places with us in a heartbeat for what we've accomplished this season and the last three combined.

But at the same time, we're disappointed. Our goals were higher this year than they've ever been. We talked about it in the summer. We talked about it in the fall with you folks, and certainly with our internal meetings that we had. We felt like we had positioned ourselves with the experience, with the success, that it was time for more.

I just talked about it with the team. We'll have different perspective at some point, but right now we didn't finish. We weren't able to accomplish the goals that we had set for our team this particular year, so it's disappointing. It hurts.

I know our players, I know our program, I know our fans wanted it in the worst way, and I hate the fact that we weren't able to deliver it.

Q. Coach, Cam was kind of saying that they weren't tough enough, but correct me if I'm wrong, it seemed like they had a good knack of just deflecting balls out. They were really going for the rebound. They were just trying to deflect it back to a teammate. Was that something special they were able to do today?

CHRIS JANS: They're a very good offensive rebounding team. Coach Drew and his staff and their players have obviously having a really good season. I'm not in their huddles or prep or practice. I don't know if that was part of their plan.

It's not something I noticed a ton on video heading into this particular game, but it was part of why we had the rebounding differential that we had. But at the end of the day, we had our chances, and we had the ball, and we had to run out, and we turned it over. We had a chance, and it just, I don't know, wouldn't go our way.

Then we had the trap at half-court and -- I don't know. I can't wait to watch the film to see how all that transpired.

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