

1.6.25 Inside J!

[00:00:00] From the Alex Trebek stage at Sony Picture Studios, this is Inside Jeopardy!

Sarah: Hello and welcome back to Inside Jeopardy, your exclusive and official podcast destination for all things happening in the world of Jeopardy. I'm joined for the first time in 2025, By the one and only Sam Buttrey. Where are you, Sam?

Sam: Coming to you from the Inside Jeopardy! remote studio in Paraguay, where I'm in the department called Presidente Hayes, after our own Rutherford B.

Sarah: Ah, you know, I knew you'd come up with something great for 2025. How is the new year? How was your break? You know, how is, How is life with the Buttry family?

Sam: You know, it's been an unalloyed delight between Thanksgiving and New Year's as it always is. My only sadness was that there weren't enough episodes of Inside Jeopardy, your exclusive and official podcast. Oh, you already did that.

Sarah: Yeah, but you're right, Sam. And I'm sure everyone has missed us in our absence.

I gotta say it was [00:01:00] nice to have a bit of a break. I love, I love the pod, but you know, it's been a busy, busy, busy year.

Sam: Good. But, but we're back. Back doing the regular pod now with 2025, a vista stretching out in front of us with unexamined beauties of Jeopardy still to come.

Sarah: Well, it was a big break for our writer Marcus Brown.

He and his wife did welcome their twins on the 27th. I know we had talked about the shower. So just wanted to let you know that they have been born safely. Also, you know, Jeopardy is big. We're, we're always out in pop culture in different ways. And I don't know, do you play Connection, Sam?

Sam: I do. The New York Times game in which you link together different, uh, names or words.

Sarah: Yes. So I'm sure it made you happy when you played on December 30th. I know I, it brought joy to me when there was names with an exclamation mark as one of the categories. And of course. Jeopardy, right there, along with Yahoo, Airplane, and Pink, I think.

Sam: Those are the ones, and by golly, I got that set of [00:02:00] four.

Because, as you know, Jeopardy ends with an exclamation point, and you have to put that in your emails, or people get mad.

Sarah: It's true. It's like naked, if you don't put that at the end. Also in the Jeopardy world, the host of Jeopardy over in the UK, Stephen Fry, was knighted. So, I feel like, you know, we're, we're, uh, We're like a six degrees of separation of being knights, Sam.

Sam: We are, and I call Ken Jennings Sir Ken, even though he hasn't officially been knighted yet. I feel like that's probably on the horizon. I'll write to King Charles, see what he says.

Sarah: I like that. And speaking of Ken Jennings, he's officially on Instagram. You know, he wasn't a big grammer. For a lot of time, but he's now joined Instagram.

You can find him at who is Ken Jennings? One of his debut posts had to do with second chance coming up and he was going to give other trends a second chance. He did planking and the bottle challenge and I believe he did the ice bucket challenge and And challenged you, Sam. [00:03:00]

Sam: He did, and as you recall, the Ice Bucket Challenge requires you to challenge somebody, so I gratefully accepted the challenge, but instead of pouring the ice over my head, I merely put it into a refreshing beverage.

Sarah: Ah, okay, well, if you want, next time you're down, you know, here at the Alex Trebek stage, we will be happy to pour a bucket of ice on your head. We shot that right before we left for the break, and Ken was very gracious, because, you know, he's, he had taped first. Two days, several episodes. And I was saying, Hey, at the end of the day, what do you think about, you know, little ice on your head?

And he's such a good sport. He wasn't going to eat cinnamon, but he did pretty much everything else. And I love him for that. I have to ask Sam, any New Year's resolutions for you?

Sam: Well, I have the usual things, uh, about getting in shape, but I will say they opened a yoga studio near us, so I've been doing a lot of yoga, and I don't know if I'm any better at yoga, but I am very good at rolling up a yoga mat.

That's kind of my thing.

Sarah: Okay. How about you? Uh, well, I haven't even, uh, really thought about them yet. Because [00:04:00] I mean, it's already January 6th. I might have wanted to give a bit more thought to that, but I've really just been reveling in not working, uh, to be honest and enjoying the break. But yes, I think work life balance continues to be my big, uh, my big resolution.

Yes,

Sam: as it should be.

Sarah: Uh, well, we did kick off the post season second chance last week, but before we get into those games, which I think were so much fun. We have to say that Celebrity Jeopardy! Season 3 is back. That is going to debut this Wednesday, January 8th, on ABC. And we have quite a fun lineup in the first game.

You're gonna see Max Greenfield from New Girl, Camilla Luddington from Grey's Anatomy, and W. Kamau Bell, great comedian. And if you don't catch it Wednesday at 9, 8 central on ABC, You can catch it the next day on Hulu. So you're not going to want to miss those games. Our celebrities really showed up this season and, uh, you know, it's, uh, it's not [00:05:00] just your average, uh, celebrity Jeopardy.

I'm just going to say, you're going to want to see it.

Sam: And there's an excellent teaser, which I saw, I think on Hulu as well, featuring all of the celebrities saying a sentence or two about what their Jeopardy experience was like or what their expectations were. So it's a delight to see all these people one after another, as we get ready for Celebrity Jeopardy.

I'm stoked.

Sarah: Yeah, there's a million dollars for charity on the line. So we're going to see some great competition over the next 13 weeks. You won't want to miss that. But last week, if you were watching in syndication, when second chance kicked off, uh, we had something new on the set. Uh, what do you think of it, Sam?

What is it?

Sam: Well, first I'll say with my eagle eye, I was able to spot the very subtle set change that involves a sign that says Jeopardy that is about the size of a two story building. An enormous Jeopardy sign back there, but it's not out of scale. I like it. It brings home the fact that we're watching Jeopardy.

Honestly, I like it. I think it's a good addition to the set. And, uh, that made its debut at Second Chance. So, very exciting.

Sarah: Yes, it was, you know, in pop culture [00:06:00] when we first brought back the big letters. Featuring pop culture and Jeopardy above, you know, the header of the set, and we thought, wow, that really, you know, brought back the old feeling of the old Jeopardy set.

And we decided that we wanted to bring it back in syndication as well. So we've waited till the debut of the postseason to bring it back. And I feel like it does offer that retro feeling. I know others are wondering, is it going to? You know, flash the different light colors like it did back in the day. I don't think so, but you know, anything's possible.

We can do anything with that sign. We, we lit it up the colors of Christmas on our last day in the studio before we went out for holiday break. So anything's possible.

Sam: We all have to just have to wait and see.

Sarah: Well, we did have some exciting weeks of gameplay that you didn't hear about on the pod because we took our little hiatus.

So we want to quickly go through what you missed if you weren't watching Jeopardy. Ashley Chan secured four wins, defeated by Eric Weldon Schelling in her fifth game. [00:07:00] Ashley told us that, you know, in that last game, the boards, they just weren't on her side. She was hoping for a bit more. Sports and when Ken said that it is pretty likely that she will make it to the tournament of champions with her four wins She said that after that first win that was in fact

her goal So looking forward to hopefully welcoming her back At least we'll see her in champions wildcard have to see how the numbers fall out But we will not this will not be the last time we see Ashley on the Alex Trebek stage

Sam: You got to feel a little bad for Eric Weldon Schilling who went up against four game winner Ashley Chan Defeated her and then was instantly faced with Laura Fata, who went on to win seven wins and become the first official TOC qualifier for the 2026 Tournament of Champions.

So stay tuned for that.

Sarah: Hard to believe we're already talking about 2026. Uh, you know, Ken asked Laura, what do you credit your Jeopardy! success to? And she said that she worked in a library starting at age 14 and she just absorbed a lot of information. We hear it time and time again, librarians, such, such good jeopardy [00:08:00] champions.

And obviously working in a library or being in a library, a lot of your life has to be beneficial. Ken also asked Laura what she plans to do during her holiday break. And she said she'll be enjoying them, but she wants to prep. You know, I'm a preparer. She said, the hardest thing is I want to be prepared, but you can't control so much.

And that part is hard. So I'm trying to control what I can. I hear you, Laura. I hear you.

Sam: It's got to be difficult. I don't know if you, uh, gain a benefit by having most of a year to prepare for the 2026 TOC, or if you would be better served by being one of the later qualifiers coming off Jeopardy! A little more fresh in terms of things like the buzzer.

So we'll find out how she does.

Sarah: Well, lucky for Laura, she does get to take a break because we're headed into the post season. But before that break, I had the chance to catch up with her after her seventh win. Laura Fata, you are a seven game Jeopardy! Champion. I have to know. How does that sound? Amazing.

What was your goal coming into all of this? What were you hoping for?

Laura: Not to [00:09:00] embarrass myself on national television.

Sarah: Mission accomplished. Okay. Now I have to ask, you mentioned once that a co worker co worker auditioned for you? I'm a little confused about this. How did you get here, Laura?

Laura: So she put my name, I guess she sent the, the, the email.

I think it was maybe a little bit, I'm not sure when the anytime test started. So it might've been before that. So it was like 2020, maybe 2019 maybe. Um, and we used to pull up at work, the J archive and just ask each other questions. And she's like, you're really good. And I'm like, eh, you know, so she like signed everything.

So everything was coming to my work email. Like, so. for everything to

Sarah: remind you to take the test. So I

Laura: got the emails like, okay, I'll take the test. And then I guess I made it to the next. I said, I'll do that. And then I'll do that again. And

Sarah: wow, I love these types of stories because so many of our jeopardy champions, they don't think that they necessarily could do well on this stage.

Your coworker had to convince you, and here you are seven wins later, Laura.
[00:10:00]

Laura: Yeah, I can't believe it. So she was, she was right

Sarah: throughout your run. You've kind of seen it all. You've come from behind, you've had high scores. You've had not as high scores. You've had runaway wins. It's kind of been a rollercoaster watching your seven games.

It

Laura: has been. It has been a roller coaster. And like, you know, I won. I won the one game. So it's like, okay, I'm going to keep going. And I guess it was my fourth game where I was like way behind. And I was like, if this is where it ends, you know, that's okay. But, you know, just trying to make that final wager and make it make sense and give myself a chance.

And it's it's worked out.

Sarah: So at one point, Ken announced you are our first official qualifier for the 2026 Tournament of Champions, because obviously We're about to play the 2025 Tournament of Champions. You're winning in 2024. It's, it's kind of an odd

Laura: timeline for you, right? It is, it is. When I, I, I was surprised when I heard it was 2026.

I thought, oh gosh, that's so far in the future that I'm going to continue [00:11:00] to think about it and prepare.

Sarah: Yes. You said you're a preparer. Yes. So knowing that you'll have that much time to prepare for a TOC appearance, is that a good thing or is it just like, uh, a year plus of homework?

Laura: I think it's a good, a good thing, but You know, this has occupied a lot of my mind since I got the call and I'm thinking, I'm going to be thinking about this for a year and a half, maybe.

I don't know. So, um, maybe that part's a little, a little daunting, but you know, I'm, I'm excited about the opportunity to come back and compete again.

Sarah: Well, for anyone who's watching and they're never thinking, maybe they have what it takes. They, they were the alternate in quiz bowl. What would you say

Laura: to them, Laura?

Anybody can do this. Um, go take the anytime test. And you know, um, I think I'm pretty just play the game that you want to play and what you think is working for you

Sarah: play your game. It is working. Laura. Congratulations on seven wins. Thank you. We'll see you after a short hiatus. Yes. We'll see in the spring.

Practically. [00:12:00] Okay. Yes. Congratulations. Thank you. You heard it from Laura. Take the anytime test. I think that should be everyone's New Year's resolution. Get out there. Take the test. You could be the next Laura Fata or the Even if you don't win, you could be in second chance, which debuted last week. Let's take a look at game one, where we saw Alex Mishev, Will Yancey, and Tekla Sauter.

Tight game between Will and Alex. Multiple lead changes throughout Double Jeopardy, but with the help of two correct daily doubles, Will had the lead entering Final Jeopardy. He was correct, and he secured a spot in the finals.

Sam: So among the highlights, Tecla's daughter was in the audience and during the break asked Ken, how old were you when you started this job?

And Ken joked, it was a couple of years ago, so I was still in my forties and I can no longer say I'm in the forties. Can you imagine someone that old? And Tecla's daughter quickly responded, my dad, which got some big laughs, including Ken, well played by Tecla's daughter.

Sarah: Well, no one was as happy as Will [00:13:00] after that game.

Let's take a listen to hear how he was feeling.

Ken: Now, as close as that looked on TV and as close as it must have felt to you guys, I looked at the stats and they are even closer. Both Alex and Will were in an exact tie with 20 successful correct responses on 39 buzzes. You guys were just neck and neck the whole time.

Came down to the Daily Doubles. Will, you found

Will: all three. Yeah, I'm, I'm the unluckiest person in the world. I can't, I'm probably gonna get struck with lightning when I walk. Outshooting. That's, that's like decades of good luck you used up right there. Right now. Um, Sarah start preparing a, preparing a funeral, I guess,

Ken: well, I hope not.

Before Thursday you got No, no, no. You got another game to play well,

Will: right.

Ken: And, uh, they were, I thought at least one of them was one of the toughest clues on the board. I had to think a lot about exsanguinate. That's kind of a tough word, but you were right there. We've been watching a lot of Dexter lately.

True story. You're like, [00:14:00] these clues are not violent enough for me. How does it feel? You're headed to the

Will: finals. Man, it's uh, there's a lot of pressure. After my first time. I missed a question about Percy Jackson. I got people offering to buy me Percy Jackson books for Christmas. I caught a lot of flack from family, but this is good.

That doesn't seem bad people wanted to give you gifts. Oh, yeah. No, that's never well, you don't know my family

Sam: All right on tuesday we saw the return of scott cheng caitlin tarr and mike ferguson This was another great game by all three players But Caitlin was on fire in the Jeopardy round with 18 correct responses.

She took the lead into double Jeopardy, which she maintained heading into final. But Scott and Mike were right on her tail. It was a triple stumper final and a savvy wager from Caitlin gave her the win.

Sarah: Yeah. Have to love Scott's response. What is third chance competition? You know, I like what he's saying.

And after the game, Ken said, you know, with Michael Davies, he loves a tournament. And now a quick word [00:15:00] from our sponsor.

Sam: So it's a new year 2025 and you're thinking, how am I going to make this year different? How am I going to build something for myself? How can I turn this business idea I've been kicking around into a reality?

Well, Shopify is there to help make it happen. And the best time to start your new business is right now. Shopify makes it simple to create your brand and get that first sale. With thousands of customizable templates, you can get your store up and running easily. Plus, Shopify helps with the details like shipping, Taxes and payments from one single dashboard, allowing you to focus on the important stuff, like growing your business.

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Sarah: And now, back to Inside Jeopardy.

Well, we witnessed our last qualifying game on Wednesday between Colleen Matthews, Gino Montoya, and Josh Moss. Gino had a hot start to the game, but it was Colleen who took the lead and doubled Jeopardy thanks to some high

value clues and a 2, 000 daily double. Did enter final in first place, but all three of our players over 10, 000 love to see that in a game.

Both Colleen and Gino were correct in final and securing the last spot in the finals. That

Sam: was a doozy with all three players really registering, and it was our New Year's Day game, so inevitably the writers produced something for us that we love, a Happy New Year's Day category.

Sarah: Yes, and in the post game, Ken pointed out that it was Colleen and Caitlin who were both runners up to Adriana Harmeyer.

Uh, they're headed obviously to the finals along with Will. Colleen joked, I mean, there's like 15 of us. We are big enough for a group. And Josh jumped in to say. Me too! [00:17:00]

Sam: Josh also has the distinction of being the son of a Jeopardy player, season 38 player Randy Moss, who was in the audience watching the game.

Randy lost to Eric Ahasik, if you remember him, a tournament of champions semi finalist back in 2022.

Sarah: Yeah, Reddit fans love this game. They said, you know, what a match to kick off 2025. This was a classic, great game with three knowledgeable players. I certainly couldn't tell early in the game who was going to win.

And finally, the spirit of Adriana Harmeyer prevailed strongly on the New Year's Eve and New Year's Day games with Kaitlyn Tarr and Colleen Matthews winning after both losing to her, although Josh wasn't as lucky.

Sam: Well, Will, Kaitlyn, and Colleen were back on Thursday for day one of our two day total point affair, and Will put on a dominant performance.

With 23 correct responses, he entered final with 20, 000 and a huge lead. There, Colleen was the only player to come up with the correct response, but Will wagered zero to protect his lead heading into day two.

Sarah: Yeah. Will said after the game, these gals are tough and I am just thankful back on Reddit. [00:18:00] Again, people loving this game.

I like these three players a lot, very different, but equally enjoyable personalities and vibes. Every time I would cheer for one, another would answer and I would want to cheer for them too. So that's the kind of reaction you want to have when you're having the finals of second chance. Obviously, uh, this, this post season off to a great start.

We wrapped it up. On Friday, with the second day of the two day total point final, another great game between our three finalists. Colleen and Caitlin really turned it on in this game. Strong finish to double jeopardy gave Caitlin the lead heading into final, but all three players were in contention. Will and Colleen were both correct, but it was Will who secured the win at a spot in our upcoming Champions Wildcard.

Sam: Another doozy, and I'd love to see Colleen and Caitlin back into contention after Will's big lead on the first day. You never know what's gonna happen in a two day total point of fair. You never do.

Sarah: You never do. Well, right after that game, Michael and I brought Will Yancey here to the pod studio to see how he was feeling about heading on to Champions Wildcard.

Michael: [00:19:00] Here we are, fresh off his victory in week one. of Second Chance, Will Yancey. What a surreal day this has been and getting even more surreal as you join us in the podcast studio, Will. Absolutely.

Will: We, we live in the central time zone and then the time change happened the night before we got out here. So I was in bed, I was asleep by seven o'clock last night because my body thought it was ten and I was up at like four thirty or five this morning.

So it has been a long, long day. But a good day.

Sarah: Well, I want to go back to September. And you played a great game. And people started talking about Will Yancey's Second Chance. Had you heard of Second Chance? Did you have Second Chance dreams when you left that day? What, what was your plan for when and if you might return to the Alex Trebek stage?

I

Will: had not heard of Second Chance. I watched Jeopardy quite a bit, but because I teach and I have classes during the day, it doesn't, I don't, Like, I get

to [00:20:00] watch it at the end of the week when I'm not teaching. Sure. And, um, the first I'd heard of Second Chance was when I, after it was over and Ken was talking to us and he said, you know, I think you're probably a pretty good candidate for Second Chance.

I was like, okay, fantastic. Um, so as far as preparing what I'd plan to do, what, and I told my wife the first time we came out here, what, if anything kills me, it's going to be pop culture. If it happened since 2000, Man, I just don't really care. So, um, I tried to just bone up on my, and what killed me, I missed a question about Percy Jackson.

I had, you know, I was in my forties when those books came out. So I, I'd heard of it, but I didn't know the answer. And, uh, so I tried to bone up on pop culture a little bit and I don't know how successful I was.

Michael: So the first time you came here, didn't go completely according to plan, but then you heard that you may be a candidate for second chance redemption jeopardy as it is sometimes referred to.

Um, And you get the call and you're heading back. What is in your mind as you're heading back here?

Will: Mostly, you know, mostly don't [00:21:00] embarrass myself. Um, and really more than anything, I feel so fortunate to have come on the show the first time to begin with. I've been watching Jeopardy since I was a teenager in the 1980s.

And, um, so getting to come back, it felt like playing with house money. Like, you know, I'm loose, I'm good. I get a second chance. Uh, when I came out the first time, I came by myself. And this time I was able to bring my wife with me. And really, that was more important to me than anything else. She wanted, I wanted her to experience all this.

And be a part of it because she didn't get to the first time and so I was, I was glad not only, not only did I win, but she won a door prize. How crazy is that? Yeah.

Sarah: The Yanceys are winning. I will say her name is Sarah. So I love her already. Yeah. Joyful woman. She's actually right outside the pod. You got to give her a shout out during the games.

And so that has to be a good feeling. But I have to think after your first qualifying game. You had to feel pretty good. You put on a great performance, and it was a great game between all [00:22:00] three competitors, but you were solid.

Will: I'm not good at most things. I am good at retaining useless facts. And, um, all through high school and college, I played Quiz Bowl, or I called it College Bowl when you get to college.

But, um, it's just something I've always done and always been into. So, it just kind of comes natural.

Sarah: So then you got to watch two games and kind of sum up the competition. How was it feeling knowing that you were going to go up against two women who happened to lose to none other than Adriana Harmeier.

So you obviously had some tough competition heading into the finals.

Will: They worried me. Those ladies are sharp, uh, very, very nice ladies. I couldn't ask for better, just people to, to do this with, but there's both so quick on the buzzer. So that was difficult. There were a lot of questions they got that I knew and they just beat me out there very quick.

Yeah. Very smart. Um, then you, you know, Colleen knew a lot of things that I just didn't have any clue of. So I [00:23:00] feel blessed to have been able to, um, go, go against such stiff competition and, and, um, and challenge too. I mean, they were, they're fantastic.

Michael: So 23 correct responses in that, uh, in, in that first day final, it's a two game total point of fair.

You ended Double Jeopardy with 20, 000, pretty commanding lead. Um, not sure if you know this, I'm not a huge fan, I've said it on this part, I'm not a big fan of the two day total point of fair, but with respect to everybody who's come at Jeopardy before and a lot of big fans of the two day point of fair, we've left it here as part of second chance.

Probably at the end of game one, you're regretting that there is a second day of it, I imagine. Yes.

Sarah: If that was a one game winning situation, you have a runaway, it's over. But you decide? To wager zero, play it smart, and it allows you to do a pretty special shout out and final jeopardy. That

Will: was cool. Yeah.

My, my shout out was my buddy, Kerry Harden. He passed away last year, the [00:24:00] week before Thanksgiving of 2023. Uh, we became friends in sixth grade and we're friends the rest of our lives. We played quiz bowl together in high school, middle school, high school, college. And, um, Losing him was tough, and I've remained good friends with his kids.

They watched the first one, and his son, Noah, um, had, you know, commented, he said, you know, Dad would be so proud of you. So when I knew, I didn't know the answer, and I knew there was no way in hell. You can

Sarah: just say you did, though, too, if you wanted. We will never know, but you just wanted to give him a shout out.

I racked my brain

Will: for a minute, I knew

Michael: I didn't know it, so I was like, this one's for you, Carrie. Well, like the Alex Trebek stage is a very special place. It's it's it's entire being is a memorial to the great man who really led the show to this point. And I think a lot of people who come here come in memories of like grandparents who they watch the show with to, you know, people they grew up with and watch the show.

It's very special. It's almost a it's a chapel in some ways to the tribute [00:25:00] to sort of everyone who's been part of this world.

Sarah: So you only have, you know, in In Jeopardy! airtime, people go home, they have dinner, they get a good night's sleep, they come back to watch day two of the finals, but for you, it's about 15 minutes.

What do you do in that 15 minutes to get ready for game two, knowing I've got a big lead, but I've seen this time and time again, anything can happen in day two.

Will: Um, I just, I went and got a drink of water. Um, I probably should have had some coffee, because I'm starting to flag a little bit. But, uh, that's it.

I, I didn't, I wasn't counting my chickens because, um, when I was on the first time, I had a big lead coming out of the first round and I was, um, up against Aiden and who ate into it and ate into it to the point where I had to go big on the final Jeopardy question and I missed. So I was, I was not overconfident.

Um, really that's all I did. I just, I went back to the green room, sat down for a minute and, um, had a glass of [00:26:00] water and. I hope I got some good questions in the second round, or second game. Yeah,

Michael: you uh, put on the purple suit from your original game, which is, what is it, purple or? Lavender. Lavender, I like that.

Lavender, yes. It's very, uh. Skylark. That's really appropriate. You know, this morning I woke up, I've got to tell you this thing. It's that when I saw your jacket, I was thinking about this. I just went and sat outside of my garden and I watched a hummingbird in the lavender in my garden this morning. So this was a sign

Sarah: of the

Michael: auspices.

This was like

Will: amazing. I always associate my hummingbirds with my mother too. My mother passed away in 2001. And, uh, my sister and I, if we speak of this, she loves hummingbirds. We have hummingbird feeders all over our yard. My sister and I always talk about every time we see hummingbirds, it reminds us of mom.

Wow. So you saying that. Maybe I

Michael: saw your mother this morning in my garden. It was very nice. She was doing excellent work, uh, on the, uh, on the lavender this morning. Sounds like mom.

Sarah: Well, I also want to bring up your grandmother because, uh, You talked about a great phrase that you kind of became famous for about when things are a little hot on the Alastair Beck stage [00:27:00] Can you remind us of that phrase?

Will: Yeah, that's a little off color, but now you realize I grew up in North Alabama mountains and It was hot and I described as being hotter than two rats

humping in a wool sock And Jimmy was like, what was that again? I gotta write that down and Ken, Ken remembered it for today I've just got tons of those.

My dad would make things like that. He didn't make that one up, but he used to make them up off the top of his head. That's so good.

Sarah: What's been the best part for you about coming back, Will?

Will: Getting to experience it with my wife, with Sarah. That's been the best. We, we got into the hotel last night at the Culver, and I love historic hotels.

Absolutely love

Sarah: them.

Will: And we just couldn't believe, you know, wow,

Michael: that's

Will: where the munchkins used to

Sarah: party. The munchkins!

Michael: That's pretty awesome. No, this whole area is so much history on this studio lot, just down the hill, and, and just a lot of stuff around here. LA has more history, especially around the studios and around the movie business and TV business, than, than most people ever appreciate.

Sarah: Supposedly the Alex Trebek stage, part of the Yellow Brick Road.

Michael: That's what they told

Sarah: me the first time I was home. I mean, you [00:28:00] know, I don't know which part, but I love telling that story. I love knowing we're a part of that history. So next up, Champions Wildcard. And, you know, it will have some, some two game, some three game champions.

But if you look at it now You're kind of a three game champion if we sum it all up. So how do you how do you like your chances?

Will: I feel good about them. I can't ask me about that when we got done. I feel like if I get the right categories I can play with anybody.

Michael: Yeah, so what are the right categories?

History. Clearly, it's what you're a professor in history. You told me before the podcast you specialize in 19th century Texas and South, Southern history, a lot of the Civil War.

Will: That's a good category for me. Uh, sports generally is a pretty good category for me. Football, baseball, I'm fairly good with statistics.

Uh, Bible is a good category for me. And I got a whole category of that today. And then the Latin, the final, incorporated that. And so I, I, I'll do well on those.

Michael: So now you got to prepare for another [00:29:00] tournament. That's right. Field gets a little larger, a little stronger.

Sarah: You'll have another two day total point of fair.

If you can make it to the finals, Michael's favorite.

Michael: I know my favorite

Sarah: and we're playing the old style, you know, we're going old school with this tournament. So we're going to have the five quarter finals. We're going to have the four wild cards among non winners. So this is going to be a. Real Michael favorite.

Michael: I'm being challenged on all of my, all of my beliefs, but it's the postseason. I got to tell you. Um, and you know, I said this to all of your competitors today. You know, I. I'm a big sports fan and a lot of that you see that influence and a lot of the the building of the postseason and I know for one reason or another we've had so many tournaments on the show with the industrial action everything else that affected the show but this year you know we're getting this nice long regular season not as long as it will be next year but good long regular season leading into a postseason.

I love postseason Jeopardy! Watching the three of you just duel with each other and go at each [00:30:00] other and watching just how deep the knowledge goes. The writing obviously gets a little harder. These are just really wonderful

moments and thank you for being part of the show. Thank you. Thank you for watching it for your entire life.

It seems like and everybody around you who's led you to be there. So delighted you got to, uh, come back and bring your wife. So congratulations and look forward to seeing you back here soon.

Will: Thank you so much. I appreciate y'all.

Sarah: Good luck. Yes. Congratulations. Will Yancy our first of Second Chance are heading into Champions Wildcard.

Of course, week two of Second Chance kicks off today. You won't want to miss it. One more person is going to get that golden ticket to Champions Wildcard. Sam, it's time for our favorite segment, but wait, there's more. What do you have for us this week in the new year?

Sam: This week's clue, the first of the new year, comes from Wednesday's game.

Bring it. People of Africa 400.

Ken: Early 20th century King Joya of the Bamum defied colonial cartographers with his own map of his land. This, at the top, denotes West.[00:31:00]

That's the setting sun. That's why it's west.

Sam: The setting sun. Well, the Bamum are an African community in what is now Cameroon. King Njoya was a remarkable guy. He took over from his father as 17th King of the Bamum in the 1880s and lived until the 1930s. So for reference, he was roughly a contemporary of Calvin Coolidge, let's say.

Njoya was a Renaissance man eager to modernize his kingdom, and as Ken said, he led a team in creating a map of his country, partly to make his own claims ahead of European colonizers. You can view this map on the internet, and it does indeed have a setting sun at the top and a rising sun at the bottom, except that those two are indistinguishable to my eye.

They look exactly the same. Happily, the map has writing, presumably indicating which is the setting and which is the rising sun. And here's another thing Njoya did. The Bamon had an oral tradition, but no writing. And Njoya

saw the advantages of writing, but he wanted to avoid scripts that his enemies could read, German and Arabic specifically.

So he created his own writing system, which started as [00:32:00] hundreds of pictographs, but after a couple of decades turned into a syllabary, which is called Aka Uku, just after the first four syllables on the list. This is the script that appears on the map. And by setting up schools to teach it, he was able to bring literacy to maybe a thousand of his countrymen.

And Njoya also wrote 15 books, including a history of his people. Which is cool. A book of traditional medicine, which is cool. And of course, romance novels, which is a little weirder. And speaking of romance, he had over a hundred wives and over a hundred children.

Sarah: Alright, looks like he would have to write a lot of birthday cards, so that script might have come in handy.

Sam: That's the only reason, I think, to invent a script. In fact, he also arranged for a printing press for the Bamun language. Uh, although it's not clear it was ever used. He also invented a second language, an artificial language, combining German, English, and Bamoom for, uh, secret palace use. Alas, the colonizers proved too much, and for the last years of his life, the French exiled him to the modern day capital of Cameroon.[00:33:00]

The response is, King Unjoya died in this capital of Cameroon. Bzz, Sarah?

Sarah: What is What is Yawunde!

Sam: I knew you knew that, partly because we write these scripts ahead of time, but yes, Yawunde as all Jeopardy! players know, is Well,

Sarah: thank you, Sam. It is now time for this week's host chat. An audience member asked Ken, who reveals the clues on the game board?

You mean on the board?

Ken: Yes. So it's not Art Fleming anymore. Nobody's pulling aside a piece of cardboard. Uh, now it's at the press of a button. Uh, Michelle, uh, you know, is, is behind this backstage doing that. And that pops up the clue on the board and it pops up like a scanned version of the clue with my notes on it on my lectern.

So we're always kept in sync.

Sarah: There you go. Secrets revealed.

Sam: Secrets revealed. Michelle, the game board operator, Michelle

Sarah: Hampton. Yes. She's been with us for several years, works on both Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy and has to be so [00:34:00] dialed in for the entire show because it's really, you know, she has to hear the contestant, call that category and point value and select it.

As quickly as she can. And that's why we always stress for our contestants to really clearly, you know, call those categories and point values so that Michelle hears it accurately. You know, I think once a season, does she ever make a mistake and, you know, think that the contestant called for something else and then the incorrect clue might pop up and, and then we might have to replace that.

Sam: So here's to you contestants. Don't be saying same category 400 category. Come on,

Sarah: Stick with it. Let's help Michelle out.

Sam: That's not helping us.

Sarah: Well, Sam, that brings us to the end of our first episode of 2025. I want to welcome everyone to tune into Second Chance this evening or this afternoon, whenever you have that episode airing in your market.

It's a good one. You're not going to want to miss it. And we'll be back next week to discuss that as well as the debut of Celebrity Jeopardy! Season [00:35:00] 3 in primetime. See you next week.

Sam: Happy New Year.

Ken: We're so glad you're here. Stick around and click that subscribe button so you see all our latest videos.