

12.2.24 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 Sarah Foss, I'm joined in person today by the one and only Sam Buttrey, our man about town, bon vivant.

Welcome, Sam.

Sam: Great to be here. Sitting next to you in person instead of in the ridiculous Zoom window with the weirdly large can headphones.

Sarah: Yes, I know. I look at you through that little box. It's much better to see you here in person.

Sam: And I think we have a lot to talk about. Let's do that.

Sarah: Well, one of the reasons you're here is because we are in fact taping the Tournament of Champions this week.

Sam: In Jeopardy! production time, Sam.

Sarah: Oh, look at you, JPT. I learned that from the

Sam: blog. Pay attention at home.

Sarah: I like it. I like it. And we will also be hosting our third annual Jeopardy honors event.

Sam: Very exciting. I'm looking forward to seeing who gets added to the Jeopardy Hall of Fame.

Sarah: Yes. You know, in the first year we had five inductees.

It was kind of [00:01:00] a big, you know, we went with a bang for the first year, but we've only been adding one inductee each year. Subsequently, we will be doing that again this year. I don't know if we've revealed to you who our winner is, have we?

Sam: You have not. I'm looking forward to it.

Sarah: Well, it'll be a surprise for Sam along with everyone else.

But that's always a fun event. And I think the best part about honors is that it allows our Tournament of Champions competitors, as you experienced a couple of years ago, to just have some fun. Being together before all the competition sinks in.

Sam: That's exactly right. One of the great things about the Tournament of Champions is just hanging with the other players who have all been through this weird shared experience, just enjoying one another.

Of course, the Jeopardy people are nice enough to spring for an open bar, which is nice, unless you're playing Jeopardy the next day. Right, right. Only your spouse takes advantage of that.

Sarah: And there's past hors d'oeuvres, you know, we don't, we don't stop at anything, it's uh, it's fancy.

Sam: And we break out the blue carpet for the exciting interviews with the TOC players, Sarah.

Sarah: We do photos on the blue carpet, we have, although I will admit, we've, [00:02:00] Change the schedule. So when we first did this back when you competed, it was in the fall. It was September. We were outside. The blue carpet was lovely last year in the dead of winter. And yes, LA does have winter. We found out that we couldn't actually do the blue carpet outside because the wind was howling so loudly.

And actually it was raining that day. The rain was pounding down. So we had to make a last minute change and do the interviews actually on the Alex Trebek stage. So that's where you and I will be doing them once again this year, because it's winter. So, you know, we have to make these accommodations, but there will be a blue carpet, but that'll be for your strike a pose still photos.

Sam: Very nice. Well, there's no better place to do an interview than on the Alex Trebek stage.

Sarah: I would agree. I would agree. Well, this past week marked a pretty huge milestone, and that was the 20 year anniversary, November 30th, of when Ken

Jennings was defeated after his 74 game win streak, you know, it happened suddenly.

We just saw him go on [00:03:00] and go on. You know, he first debuted before the summer hiatus. We waited all summer to see him come back. He kept playing throughout the fall and none of us knew how long it was going to go, but we certainly didn't anticipate that. Like any Jeopardy! champion, you know, one minute you're the champion, and a few minutes later you're not, and then they turn around and they just do another game, and it's, it's over, there's no big fanfare.

But what we decided on that day was, we need a little bit of a goodbye, we need a little bit of a, a kiss off or something, so we decided to call Ken Jennings. on to the stage the next day after he had lost. Obviously it was the same day, but the next episode day. Um, so let's take a look at that unique moment in time.

I want to bring him out right now. Ken Jennings, a sense of relief. Maybe a little bit, a little bit. It's all been very overwhelmed. Do you know exactly how much you won over the past few months? I don't. I think it starts with a two 2, 520, 000 and change. [00:04:00] Plus even Better news, you picked up 2, 000 for finishing in second place on yesterday's show.

What are you going to take away from your experience as our champion over these many weeks and months? It's been a great time, you know, it's the kind of thing that only comes along once in a lifetime, and I've just tried to enjoy every minute of it. I really have had a very happy life, and I hope nothing really changes.

I just want to stay the same person I am, despite it all. You were an excellent player. You caught some good breaks. And because of that combination, I'm going to say that your record of winning 74 games and 2. 5 million, setting records in Game shows, quiz shows, whatever, I don't think it'll ever be broken.

And I want to wish you good luck on behalf of all of your fans out there. You take

Sarah: care.

I think we

Sarah: can agree. Ken didn't change much, but his life certainly did. His life changed. That was a beautiful thing

Sam: they just did there. And it's good to have Ken still involved with the show after all that he's done for

Sarah: it.

Yeah, it really is the ultimate Cinderella story. To think of a ten year [00:05:00] old coming home on the bus, watching Jeopardy on the Armed Forces Network, to then becoming the greatest of all time to play the game. Alex said in that clip, and this has now been 20 years, he didn't think Ken's records would ever be broken.

And here we are 20 years later, and they haven't been. And now he is our host. It's really, you couldn't write it if you didn't live it.

Sam: Twenty years later and people are still mocking Ken about that H& R Block answer. Hardly seems fair. Right? Let's put it behind us. The man

Sarah: got free taxes. I think it was a win.

for life. Well, you recently have a little moment, the Sam Gen Z tour. Tell me about that, Sam.

Sam: Well, they, uh, spectacularly talented people in our digital and social team, Laura and Kelly, follow the trends. And apparently it's a trend to have old wrinkled people walking around talking in Gen Z slang. So they set me up with some of that.

They had to remind me precisely what it is that those kids are saying today, but I had a lot of fun doing it. pointing out parts of the Jeopardy! stage. It was a [00:06:00] Jeopardy! tour infused with Gen Z language. And it was a delight, and people seemed to like it.

Sarah: They loved it, and those words just rolled off the tongue.

I would have thought that you spoke that way every day.

Sam: As I walk around in my own closet, I say, look at all that drip.

Sarah: Let's hope you don't. That might scare your wife. That's true, yes. Well, we've talked about it for months. It's really happening in just a couple of days. The debut of Pop Culture Jeopardy!

on Prime Video this first week on Wednesday, December 4th. You are going to be able to view three episodes, so a short binge will be possible. And we want to let you know who will be playing in these first three episodes. So let's take a look at our very first game in the Knockout Rounds. We're gonna have the Queen City Kids, Mason Gardner, Samantha Banchescu, and Darcy Griffith.

Sam: Then up comes Oops, We Guessed It Again, one of the many fine names featuring Cootie Vest. Oops, We

Sarah: Guessed It Again.

Sam: If you are [00:07:00] only listening here, you did not get to see the spectacular dance moves put on by Jeopardy! producers, Sarah Whitcomb Foss. That team has Cody Vest, he competed in the 2017 Teachers Tournament as a quarterfinalist, Sofia Estales, and Anthony Peek.

Sarah: And then we have the Pop Queens, Taylor Hughley, Hailey Morris, Erika Harveld.

Sam: And that brings us to Knockout Game 2.

Sarah: It sure does. The

Sam: first team of which is All That Jazz, Naomi Calhoun, Lindsay Morris. James Johnson, more dancing here in the Inside Jeopardy! studio.

Sarah: Yeah, well, and this next team, lot to say, but it's Tinker, Taylor, Quiz Show Guys with Rob Scheer, Adam Drossen, and Jordan Hoffman.

Sam: And finally, the Little Pocket Monsters with Alex Spribble, Melissa Wasser. And Andy Hall

Sarah: for knockout game number three. This was a knockout between all previous jeopardy players. So I know a lot of people have been talking. How many former players are going to compete in pop culture? Well, this game had nine of them.

We started out with the Esprit top three, Sam [00:08:00] Spaulding back from our 2010 college championship. He was actually the runner up. We did two college championships that year. So he was in the second one. Also, Hans von Walter, who competed with Sam in that college championship and was the second runner up.

And then we had Erin McLean, who was also in that college championship, but guess what? She won the whole thing and beat the other two.

Sam: That team is loaded, but what will they do, Sarah, against the Personality Hires team? That's Emily Hogg, who played in Season 37. Zach Goslin of Season 38 and Miranda Onan, who played in Season 39 and lost to the great Ray Lalonde.

Sarah: Wow. And finally, we have the Punny Goddesses, Kelsey Barcombe, Season 35, Amy Rae, Season 37, and Ezgi Ustunda, Season 32, lost to Matt Jackson.

Sam: Matt Jackson, a fine player. I know that guy. You know that guy.

Sarah: You've played with him. I've

Sam: played with him, yeah.

Sarah: Yeah.

Sam: So I'm looking forward to binging that right after watching [00:09:00] five games of Jeopardy being taped on Wednesday.

I'm going to go back, fire up Amazon Prime and binge those episodes of Pop Culture Jeopardy. I've got news for you,

Sarah: Sam. You're going to have even more because we're actually taping seven episodes on Wednesday.

Sam: Oh, including the exhibition.

Sarah: Yeah. And the sixth quarter final game. So you're going to have, if you watch all seven of those plus binge three, you're gonna have a 10, Episode Jeopardy Day.

Sam: Think how much smarter I'll be at the end of that day. Oh,

Sarah: and just how entertained you will be, Sam. So

Sam: much Jeopardy. You can never have too much. You

Sarah: really can't. All right, well, let's take a look at the highlights from last week's game. Back in regular Jeopardy, we kicked off the week with our returning champion, Adam Hirsch, battling back against Kevin.

And Carolyn, Adam got out to an early lead but then dropped 3,000 thanks to an incorrect daily double. But then Kevin, thanks to a 3,000 correct daily double, ends up with a runaway win and a good start to the week.

Sam: Remember, those daily doubles will kill you, Sarah. A 3,000 daily double, if you get it right, adds 3,000.

If you get it wrong, it subtracts 3,000. [00:10:00] That's a 6,000 swing in that, my friend. Is the Jeopardy.

Sarah: Ah, I see what you did there. One thing I loved about this game, we had a category featuring Ala'i Cravalho. She's the star of Moana 2. And she did a category all about Polynesian culture. To not only promote the movie, but also to bring awareness to various clues about Polynesian culture.

And I think what was so inspiring is how committed she is to making sure the clues were authentic. That they accurately represented the history of Polynesian culture. And we actually worked with cultural consultants to make sure that everything the writers put to pen or to text Or to type was culturally accurate and, uh, I thought it was a pretty fun category.

Sam: It was a great category. Well presented and I'm happy to hear that our writers have a pen because they do so much typing.

Sarah: Yeah, we were supposed to shoot that category with Ala'i actually in some region of the South Pacific, but it didn't work out. So she was at the Polynesian Hotel in Orlando, which is almost the same thing.

I just was there actually on my family [00:11:00] vacation over Thanksgiving and I, it was pretty fun. It was practically like being in Polynesia. We ate at the Ohana restaurant. It was, you know, like going to South Pacific. The

Sam: new travels of the Clue Crew consist of following wherever Sarah goes on vacation and shooting clues there.

That's nice. Save money that way.

Sarah: Yeah, I think it's going to be great, and I hope I can keep it exciting in my family travels, but I like that plan. A

Sam: lot of good vacation choices there. Well, our new champion, Kevin Laskowski, is an Episcopalian priest. The collar gives it away. He's been a priest for two years, but tape day was his 19th wedding anniversary, so that was neat.

Yeah. And you look at a priest and you think, well, maybe his strengths are going to be biblical or whatever. But in fact, he tore it up in the rap, schools, old and new category. So good for him. All right, well, Kevin returned on Tuesday to face Ryan and Samantha. All three players battled neck and neck, but unfortunately, Ryan dropped to third place.

When he missed two daily doubles. Then with the help of the last two clues of the game, Kevin took the lead into final where he was the only player to get the correct response to secure the win.

Sarah: This was a great game because it was so evenly matched. And I think everyone [00:12:00] loves to see a game where all three players really performing well, correct responses.

Kevin had 17. Ryan had 18, Samantha with 15. And I think a lot of fans reacted to just enjoying seeing the game played and that more. traditional way, you know, starting at the top of a category, playing it through. It's, it's unconventional at this point in Jeopardy, but when you see it, it's like, oh, that was nice.

Sam: That was fun to see with only one or two exceptions. The first round especially went top to bottom all the way. Very old school. I'm not sure if I recommend it. But it is fun to cut for the commercial break after three categories are exhausted and three categories remain.

Sarah: Yeah. Ken talked to Kevin after the game and he said, you know, you're doing well up here.

You're obviously now gonna, you know, go into your third game. Are you feeling comfortable? And he said, no, but I'm happy to be on the stage. And then Ken asked him, is it similar to being behind the pulpit? And Kevin joked, very much so. You know, putting my hands here makes me feel very comfortable on either side of the podium.

But then. [00:13:00] You put the buzzer here and you put the game board up there. And then it's, it's very, very different. And now a quick word from our sponsor. When you think about businesses that are selling through the roof, like Heinz and Mattel, sure, you think about a great product, but an often overlooked secret is actually the businesses behind the business, making selling simple for millions of businesses, that business.

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Go to [shopify.com slash jeopardy](https://shopify.com/jeopardy) to upgrade your selling today. [shopify.com slash Jeopardy](https://shopify.com/jeopardy). And now back to Inside Jeopardy. Well, on Wednesday, we had [00:14:00] Kevin going up against Drew and Julia, multiple lead changes in this game, but it was Julia who managed to take the lead heading into final, Kevin trailing in second place.

And in that round, Julia. Was the only player unable to come up with the correct response. So Kevin comes from behind to earn his third win.

Sam: Three wins for him. Good for him. Interestingly, this game had a category called quoting the King James Bible, and Ken seemed a little surprised that Kevin didn't go there first.

In fact, the contestants saved that one for last. Kevin did get two of the clues. Correct. Although two of them were triple stumpers. How about that?

Sarah: Well, Ken asked Kevin about that in the post game chat. Let's take a listen.

Well, that was anybody's game. You all played very, very well. But a stroke of luck for Kevin, or, I don't want to not say divine intervention, I mean, it could be luck, we don't know.

I'm all about, you know, God is on my side until he's not, so, so I won't speculate about who we wanted to win. Now, is there, is there going to be any trouble that you missed [00:15:00] the final two clues in the Bible category? I might hear something about that. The moat in your brother's eye, and uh Yeah, I might hear something about that.

It's the King James, and I can say we don't use the King James typically in church because it's older, but Are you more of a Revised Standard Version, uh, congregation? Yeah, that's what I'll, that's what I'll say. Exactly.

I think maybe between now and then, just give a sermon about how, um, We all make mistakes.

Sarah: I want to go to Kevin's church. I mean, if he's that humorous, I have to think that his sermons are pretty good as well.

Sam: Certainly looks different from a number of Episcopalian priests I've encountered. Well, let's head into Thursday for our Thanksgiving Day game with Kevin, Debbie, and Laurel. Kevin took a small lead into Double Jeopardy, but Laurel went on a tear and took the lead.

Then with one clue left, all three players were tied at 9, 400. You can't do better than that. But Laurel scored on that last clue to take the lead in the final and all three players were correct. So it was Laurel who became our new Jeopardy! champion.

Sarah: But [00:16:00] Kevin, with three wins and a total of 52, 999, does in fact secure a spot in the 2025 Tournament of Champions to be shot in just a couple of days.

Sam: Boy, it's a quick turnaround from taping his regular shows to taping the Tournament of Champions. We'll see how he does.

Sarah: Yeah, he's probably flying right now. We have to start tomorrow.

Sam: We're in Jeopardy! production time. We're starting tomorrow. In JPT,

Sarah: yes we are. Well, Ken spoke with all the players after the game.

Let's take a listen.

You, uh, threw off the Dick Cavett curse, Laurel. You did great. Yeah, I hope so. You were having some, uh, buzzer issues at first in the early round. Yeah, well, I think part of it was that I saw the Asian literature category, and my husband, who's in the audience, studied Mandarin, and he made sure that I was adept and as knowledgeable as possible about any Asian subject, geography, so I think that helped me, and I was like, I'm just going to go for that category.

You've been studying Asian literature at home for weeks, is that right? Yeah, and then he also continues to correct my pronunciation, so there's that.

[00:17:00] I have people for that too here. Well, that Well, that was quite a turnaround. You were in a distant third, and after sweeping that category, I think you had the lead or close to it.

You found a daily double. Yeah. It was very impressive work. Yeah, very emotional, for sure. Another exciting game. I mean, we had a three way tie with one clue remaining, which we rarely see. Uh, did, how did you come up with MK Ultra, Kevin? Are you a A lot of X Files. A lot of X Files, you know, growing up. Yeah, X Files helped out with the MKUltra.

Well, that was a great Thanksgiving show, everyone. Congratulations, and Laurel, you'll be back tomorrow. Well done.

Sarah: Well, we closed out the week with Laurel as our returning champion going up against Susan and Nick. Nick and Susan battled back and forth, but it was Susan who managed to take the lead from Nick on the very last clue and double jeopardy. And after a triple stumper, Susan secured the win. As soon as the game ended, Susan actually exclaimed, How did that [00:18:00] happen?

You know, she was very surprised. And I think we were all a bit surprised, because she didn't do a traditional wager from the lead. You know, bet small, but it ended up being the right move. And that's why she's the champion.

Sam: It did work out for her. I was surprised that she didn't bet enough to make sure that she beat Nick if she got it right.

She bet so small that if Nick had bet zero and there had been a triple stumper, Nick would have won there as well, so I was surprised by her bet, but again, it worked out. She's the Jeopardy! champion, and we'll see her Monday.

Sarah: Yeah, what a weekend for her. But now, it's time. You're right here to do it. But wait, there's more.

What do you have for us this week, Sam?

Sam: This week's clue comes from Tuesday's game. The category was called It's a Fake, so bring it. Fake the 1, 000.

In 1605, false hymn became czar. In 1606, false hymn suddenly became ex hymn, courtesy of a boyar and pals. Ryan. Who's Dmitry? The false Dmitry, you are correct.

Sam: Sarah, there are a lot of Dmitrys in this story, so I need you to pay attention.

Sarah: Okay, okay, I'm focused on this one. Let's start

Sam: with [00:19:00] Ivan the Terrible, the first official czar of Russia. And he held that post for about 35 years. He had four sons and at least six wives. His first three sons were named Dmitry, or Dmitry, maybe.

Ivan and Feodor. Dmitry died in childbirth. So Ivan became the czarevich, the crown prince. However, uh, Ivan the Son was killed by Ivan the Terrible, apparently, in a fit of rage. Because, apparently, he was terrible. No one ever called him Ivan the Mellow. So that put Feodor next in line as the Tsarevich. And, uh, when Feodor was 24, uh, one, one of the wives down the line produced another child, also named Dmitri.

Okay, Ivanovich. When Ivan died, Feodor became Tsar, and he married a woman named Irina, whose husband, Boris Gudunov, was so famous he has his own opera. When Dmitri Ivanovich was about nine, he died mysteriously. The mainstream theory is that he died during an epileptic fit, but the conspiracy theory is that The Boris [00:20:00] Gudunov people had him knocked off so that Boris could take over from Feodor when Feodor died childless.

Whichever way that happened, that's what ensued. Feodor did die childless, and Boris Gudunov was put on the throne. So far, so good.

Sarah: Okay, I think I've got a reasonable amount of Dmitry so far. I'm following, Sam.

Sam: Okay, so far, so good. Uh, Boris died, Feodor took over. This was the beginning of what Russian historians call the Time of Troubles.

One of Gudunov's rivals popped up. This was a guy claiming to be Dmitry Ivanovich. He claimed he had escaped Gudunov's assassination attempt back when he was nine, and that he was the rightful czar. And when the army switched over to him, he died. Theodore, the Theodore, the second the son of Boris, Guten off was killed and Dmitri was installed on the throne as the czar of all Russia.

Today we refer to him as false Dmitri. The first, the first for reasons that will become clear in just a second. The, uh, aristocrats turned against Dmitri when [00:21:00] he favored Poland and did other things, and they had him off and they put in their own guy on the throne and that was fine. But the following year, a second, Dmitri appeared claiming to be.

Dimitri Ivanovich, who had escaped assassination at age nine and then the previous year, and Dimitri's wife claimed that this new guy, even though apparently they didn't look anything like, this new guy really was her husband. So this guy, false Dimitri II, raised an army, marched on Moscow, but he was killed by one of his own officers, and you'd think that would be it.

But the following year, a third false Dimitri appeared, made the claim to the throne, and was himself killed. So, from Russia in the 17th century, final score, real Dimitri's two, false Dimitri's three.

Sarah: Boy, Sam, that's great, but I was just hoping for a few more Dimitris.

Sam: I think five Dimitris is the right number of Dimitris.

I thought

Sarah: at any point you were going to say,

Sam: But wait, there are more Dimitris.

Sarah: Well, right now we have more host chat. So an audience member asked Ken, [00:22:00] you know, what is your least favorite trivia category?

I feel like often if you like, if you play bar trivia or something, there will always be one person on the team who's like, the sports person and that's their job.

That is not my job on the team. Like, I'm not terrible, but I am not, like, we definitely need an extra sports person if, if I'm on the team, because that is, That is not my thing. Like, especially when I was a kid, yes, because you know, there's There were like many fewer Super Bowls to remember when I was a kid, you know, 30 years ago.

Now it's like, wait, who won last year?

Sarah: I just want to picture Ken Jennings on any bar trivia team. I think he'd be pretty good at it. That's just fun. So when Jeopardy! Bar League launches, you know, we'll just have to get

Sam: But I do love the idea of a Bar League team assembling players with different strengths.

This is what I'm hoping we'll see in pop culture.

Sarah: Yeah, different strengths. Some person's a movie guy. Someone's a music guy. Exactly right. Someone's more of a, you know, reality TV guru.

Sam: It changes the way you prepare for the game, I think.

Sarah: Well, you will see that that was [00:23:00] certainly the strategy with some of the teams, and I think, uh, you'll see how it works out on Wednesday.

Well, now, Sam, we asked for them, and we received them, you know, ask and you shall receive. We have a viewer question, and this one is really directed towards you. Daniel asks, What would be your ideal Jeopardy! category, and conversely, what category would you have hated to have seen come up on the Jeopardy!

board during your run? For me personally, Daniel says wordplay and crossword categories are particularly strong, whereas math is like foreign language.

Sam: Well, Daniel, first of all, thanks for writing in. And if anyone else has questions, send them in to InsideJeopardyPodcast at gmail. com. I will tell you, like you, Daniel, I love the wordplay categories, the anagrams, the palindromes, the Uh, before, during and after the rhyme time and triple rhyme time, maybe before, during and after was my favorite because it requires you to synthesize several facts quickly and come up with a cool sounding answer like Isle of Man, Ray Charles or Pete [00:24:00] Rose Garden of Earthly Delights, you know, and there, I love the wordplay categories because I think it differentiates Jeopardy from other, you know, Quiz shows that rely maybe more on fact memorization.

Um, I like them because I think I did well on them. And I like them for me because I think they're hard to prepare for. So I know, for example, Masters champion Victoria Gross feared, she didn't fear anything, but she feared wordplay categories a little bit more than some others, just because they're hard to prepare for.

So the categories I didn't like were also ones that I couldn't really prepare for. Uh, but which I didn't happen to know organically. So on Friday there was a category on, uh, billboard hits from a particular date in 1983. I knew all those because I was listening to the radio in those days because that's how old I am.

But I was in a game or maybe I was watching a game in which the category was something like rap lyrics from the 90s or maybe it was pop lyrics from the 90s. These were songs I didn't know, artists I didn't remember, and definitely not lyrics I ever would have come up with. And it's not the sort of thing you can prepare for.

So I'm not saying it's not a legitimate. Subject. It is. I just didn't have to know it. [00:25:00] So I do not look forward to pop culture more recent than when I was growing up way back in the Herbert Hoover days. Thanks for sending in your question, Daniel.

Sarah: Yes, thank you, Daniel. And Sam, you can't know everything.

Sam: No, you can't.

That's why I need a team full I need Ken Jennings on my trivia team.

Sarah: There you go. Well, that brings us to the end of this week of Inside Jeopardy! We have a lot to do. We've got to get ready for Jeopardy! Honors TOC, and we will be back next week with lots of highlights from this week's game, as well as the debut of Pop Culture Jeopardy!

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