

2.10.25 IJ! Audio

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

Michael: Here on the Alex Trebek stage where we're coming to you, uh, for this week's edition of Inside Jeopardy, your official podcast destination for all things happening in the world of Jeopardy. I'm Michael Davies, I'm here with producer Sarah Foss.

And we're coming to you fresh off the JIT. The only thing I know right now is where we are in Jeopardy! production time in J P T. We're coming off the J I T. Where we are on J A T at this point, I have no idea, Sarah.

Sarah: Alright, well I'll help you out.

Michael: Okay, good.

Sarah: In J A T, last week, we kicked off the finals of the T O C.

Michael: I remember them.

Sarah: Adriana took a win. Tonight, or today, wherever you get your Jeopardy, whatever time, game two of the finals.

Michael: Wow, amazing. Well, we also know Pop Culture Jeopardy, uh, those quarterfinals are streaming now. You can catch three more episodes this Wednesday.

Sarah: Yes, and as if you haven't had enough Jeopardy, also on Wednesday in primetime on ABC, we've got [00:01:00] three more quarterfinalists, Suzy Essman, Blake Anderson, and Robin Thede, all going for a spot in the semis.

Michael: It's time now to reveal for all of you, in Inside Jeopardy. The 27 greats who are going to be making their return to this Alex Trebek stage or have already returned here for the second annual JIT.

Sarah: All right, let's take a look at our first group.

Michael: Doug Molitor, Altadena.

Rachel Schwartz, Berkeley. Shane Whitlock, Benton.

Sarah: Robin Carroll, Atlanta.

Roger Craig, Arlington, Virginia. Seth Wilson, Oak Park.

Sarah: So just in this first group, Michael, we're calling it kind of our OGs. And this JIT is going to have six decades of champions starting off. With Doug Molitor, he played back with Art Fleming in the 70s, then again with Alex Trebek, and now with Ken Jennings.

Michael: These are names that, ever since I joined the Jeopardy! staff, these are, these are the greats. When I, when I've asked you, who are the great names in the history of Jeopardy!, these are the names you've given me.

Sarah: Yeah, we have Rachel Schwartz, of course, a TOC [00:02:00] winner from back in the day, Shane Whitlock. An OG college champion, Robin Carroll, she's known for a TOC win in many other competitions that she's peered in.

Roger Craig, also a TOC winner. He's the one, you know, he beat Ken Jennings record for the highest total. And he held that record for years until this guy came along, uh

Michael: James James. I remember watching Roger Craig on television just like at home, you know, with a cup of tea and enjoying him very much. So I'm looking forward to that.

We

Sarah: haven't seen him since the all stars. He's back and 12 game champion Seth Wilson. Let's take a look at the next group. Skylar

Hornback, Sonora. Avi Gupta, New Haven.

Sarah: Claire Sattler, New York. Maya Wright, Atlanta.

Michael: Jackson Jones, Louisville. Oh, the kids! The kids are back in town. Yes. I love it.

Sarah: First up, Skylar Hornback.

You're going to remember him from Kids Week. He had the biggest one day total we've ever seen, and his smile showed it. Can't wait to see what he can do all these years later. I guarantee you we're [00:03:00] going to show a photo of him back in the day, because we love when we do that on the show. We've also got Avi Gupta, Claire Sattler, Maya Wright, and Jackson Jones.

These were top selling, top finishing teen tournament winners. They came back for our high school reunion, and we can't wait to see them back here for JIT.

Okay. The third batch. John Foked, El Paso.

Sarah: Emily Sands, Chanhassen.

Raymond Goslow, Marietta.

Sarah: Margaret Shelton, Pittsburgh.

Jaskaran Singh, Plano.

Sarah: Jackie Kelly, Philadelphia.

Jonathan Fisher, Coral Gables. Ryan Long, Philadelphia.

Sarah: All right, these are some of our recent greats. Of course, we've got John Foked. He was a four game champion, did very well in TOC. Emily Sands, she won Champions Wild Card, performed well in TOC. She's back. Raymond Goslow, he was our 2022 JNCC. First runner up, came so close to beating Jess Caron.

We've also got Jess Caron, the champion there. Margaret Shelton, we love her.

Michael: Regular Virginia.

Sarah: Ah, she's back. Jackie Kelly, another strong four game champion. Jonathan [00:04:00] Fisher, who took out Matt Amodio, and also is in the League of Legends as an 11 game champion. And Ryan Long, our 16 game winner from a couple years back.

They're all here, along with this next group.

Hannah Wilson, Chicago. Ray Lalonde, Toronto, Ontario. Ben Chan, Green Bay. Troy Meyer, Tampa. Luigi de Guzman, Arlington, Virginia.

Sarah: Javeria Zaheer, Whitby, Ontario. So you've got Hannah Wilson, Ray Lalonde, Ben Chan, Troy Meyer, Luigi de Guzman, Javeria Zaheer won second chance in Champions Wild Card.

Luigi, a tough five game winner who took out Javiria, Troy Meyer, and Ben, they were finalists in last year's TOC, and Ray Lalonde, 13 game champion, Hannah Wilson, 8 game champion, this field is stacked.

Michael: Yeah, these are giants, uh, giant killers, people who on a recent basis have some of the best stats in our game.

Sarah: And finally

Michael: Amy Schneider, Oakland. Matt Amodio, New York. Oh wow, the masters. The masters have graced the stage. I mean, Amy and Matt, what can we say? [00:05:00] Both brilliant Jeopardy masters. Amy Schneider, 40 game champion. Matt Amodio, 38 game champion. Uh, champion. Absolutely phenomenal Jeopardy players.

Sarah: Yeah, and by finishing in the bottom three in Masters, they were guaranteed these spots in JIT.

Matea Roach also guaranteed one of those spots. They were not able to compete with us this year. Invitation, of course, went out to Matea, along with some other greats who just couldn't make it work for one reason or another. Brad Rudder, Chris Panulo, Andrew He, Julia Collins, and many more, but we hope to see them back on a future JIT.

Michael: Yeah, uh, the JIT, by the way, will begin airing the day after the conclusion of the TOC.

Sarah: Yeah, and the TOC is off to an incredible start. Let's take a look at last week's games. On Monday, we kicked off the week with the last of our quarterfinals, featuring Drew Gowans, Umar Kakirde, and Lucas Partridge. Drew was on fire in the Double Jeopardy round.

14 correct responses, both daily doubles. He pulls off [00:06:00] a no doubt runaway win in that game. And of course, in Final Jeopardy, he had to shout out Lisa Anne. Yeah,

Michael: Lisa Anne. Because I will worship you the rest of my days.

Sarah: Yes. Apparently, Drew had a watch party and he was posting photos. And then Lisa Anne actually commented on his photos.

Drew replied, I'm just trying to make you proud. And she said, mission already accomplished.

Michael: Oh, that's so sweet.

Sarah: I know. All right, let's hear how drew was feeling after that impressive win.

Ken: Lucas, I have to know, was the wager a reference to Drew's Taylor Swift travails?

Yes, my Spotify rap drop today. And of course, she's my top artist for I don't know how many years in a row.

So I figured why not? It's the least you could. Yeah.

Ken: Hi, Taylor. I'm sure she appreciates that. You know, we know she watches every night. I mean, Lisa Ann Walter is probably watching, I have to imagine. I hope so!

Lisa, wherever you are, thank you!

Ken: Do you feel like you're playing for both of you now? I, I totally do.

Totally do. Oh my god. I have to ask about the shirt. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You have multiple Lisa Ann Walter likenesses on [00:07:00] your Torso right now. It is. It's on. I don't think I've ever seen a crowd of Jeopardy! this excited.

Thank you, Usain. I love you. And I feel like it worked. Like, we've learned about a lot of good and bad luck on Jeopardy! Yeah, totally. It felt like,

um Like it was protecting me from like, uh, wrong answers. Is that right? What are the blows of Jeopardy? Yeah, um, Yeah, I would um, Bad wagers? What it didn't protect me from was a couple of ones that I was like, I think I know it, I think I know it, I think I didn't buzz in.

Um, and my boyfriend whacks me, he goes, You have to guess!

Ken: Well, congratulations on all three of you for making the Tournament of Champions. Well deserved, great game. Drew, we'll see you and six Lisa Ann's back in the semifinals.

Michael: Okay. On Tuesday, we saw our first semi final matchup between Adriana Harmaia of Ryan Manton and Will Wallace.

Adriana and Ryan battled throughout the game, but Adriana, with the help of a 4, 000 daily double, took a [00:08:00] strong lead, nearly earning a runaway, but Ryan managed to stay in contention. Heading into the final, they were both correct, and it was Adriana who secured the win. And the first spot in the finals.

Adriana, just very tough for my English accent. I just want to say Adriana all the time. I know, but

Sarah: you pulled it off perfectly. I really have to put on

Michael: an American accent to say it.

Sarah: Ken asked a, asked Adriana. See, it's even hard to say it all together. Ken asked Adriana how it felt coming in cold, because of course she was seated into the semi finals, so she didn't have that quarter final warm up.

And Adriana said, it's strange. I appreciate getting the chance to practice in the exhibition game, but coming out here when it's real, very different feeling. She added, I think for the moment, I can enjoy this. I'm excited that I get to come back out here again and give me a few minutes before the stress will sink in.

Moving on to Wednesday, Isaac Hirsch, Mark Fitzpatrick, and Amy Hummel. This was a great game between Isaac and Mark. Mark quickly doubling up on the first Daily Double and Double Jeopardy to put himself in the lead. Able to extend that lead heading into [00:09:00] final after Isaac lost 5, 000 on the last Daily Double.

But then Isaac was the only one who was able to come up with the correct response in final. So he gets that ever exciting come from behind win, and he's headed to the finals to join his, you know, super champion. Competitor from last season, Adriana.

Michael: That's wild. In the post game, Isaac explained that the thought process behind his, uh, Final Jeopardy wager.

The idea, uh, he said, was that if me and Mark had gotten it wrong, I would have won dollars more than him, but that didn't account for Amy, and if she had gotten it right, she would have won. And Amy joked, you're welcome.

Sarah: That's that Amy Hummel humor. You only get it in those post game chats.

Michael: I love it. Okay, on Thursday, our last semi final featuring Drew Basile, Drew Gowans, and Nealesh.

This was quite a game after a slow start for all three players. Drew doubled up on the first Daily Double. Well, Drew Goins doubled up on the first Daily Double in Double Jeopardy. But found the last Daily Double on the very next clue. He went all in again. Unfortunately, was incorrect from there. All three players worked to build their scores.

But [00:10:00] it was Nilesch who entered final in first place. Both Drew, Basile and Nilesch were correct. But Nilesch secured the win and the last spot in the finals.

Sarah: Oh, he's headed to the finals. Now, you will notice in that game, of course, we did have two, two Drews, which will make it very complicated for us. So we asked.

Drew Basile, if he wanted to go by his, first he volunteered to go by his last name. But then Drew Goins was like, well, I don't want you to have to go by your last name. So he's like, I'll go by my last name too, in solidarity. But Ken joked, were you thinking for a minute about maybe playing as Lisa Ann?

And he

said, of

Sarah: course, of course I was. And then of course, in the Daily Double that Drew found, uh, he went all in and he said, this is for May Hall, who he competed in the Champions Wildcard with. And May Hall said on Reddit, I wept. This is this companionship, you

Michael: can't, you can't beat it. We really love it.

Ken caught up with all of these players after the game. Let's take a listen.

Ken: That was a great finale everyone. Nilesch, congrats. very much. The non trap version of the music was almost [00:11:00] over by the time you wrote Valley of the Queens. Did it come to you late? Were you already

This came to me at the very end, and I can't

Ken: believe I pulled it off.

But that was a well played game, Drew. Congratulations. Uh, you had more attempts than either of your competitors, but it seemed like maybe not your day on the button.

No, honestly, I knew, I felt like I knew a good, good majority of the clues on the board. I just couldn't, couldn't get it in. Drew was beating me in the first half on the hard ones, which is where it counts.

And then, uh, Nilesch kind of turned on in the second half, so it was just, it was just, I got pinched, you know?

Ken: And a great game for Drew Goins, who had more correct responses than either Drew Basile or Nilesch in that game, but Consolation prize. Mixed luck on the Daily Doubles, right? I don't know the definition of it, yeah.

You knew Doomscrolling, but uh, when you heard Grand Maul, Maul,

Petty Maul, like, I know them. Um, you know, you get something stuck in your head right at the start of a Daily Double, even though you think, oh, this probably isn't right, it's really, really hard to shake. Um. No pun intended. Oh my god, [00:12:00] I apologize.

Uh, um, you know, the double double will have to wait until the Jeopardy! Invitational Tournament.

Ken: Hint, hint. Uh, yeah, if I'm doing the math right, you would have had a runaway if you had Grand Mal. I don't mean to twist the knife here. But like, what a remarkable journey for you this season, from Second Chance to Champions Wildcard to uh, filling in for Lisa Ann Walter and the team.

It's been

unbelievable.

Ken: Oh, you have some stiff competition in the finals. Did you see Adriana Isaac play

earlier?

Ken: Yeah,

I know how good they can be, but it's gonna be a lot of fun for sure. And either way, I'm just Uh, happy at how it's all gone and I appreciate everybody. I got to know here.

Sarah: All right, heading into game one of the finals on Friday, Adriana, Isaac and Nilesh returned.

This was a close and well played game by all three of our finalists. Isaac found both daily doubles in double jeopardy, adding 5000 to his score. He [00:13:00] narrowly takes a lead heading into final. Nilesh and Adriana tied for second. All three players over 10,000, though it was a triple stumper, though in final, Adriana, maybe not too confident in the category, makes a savvy wager.

She gets the first win.

Michael: Wow, first win in the finals. Okay, Ken spoke with the players after the game about that tricky wagering scenario.

Ken: That's a tough wagering scenario for second and third. It's easy enough for Isaac if he can work the subtraction out. I made the right wager, I think. You did. But, you know, it's unclear what these guys are going to do.

I

would assume they would both go all in. I was like, this is a great situation for me. Because if we're all wrong, then I win. And then, you know, if I'm right, I win. So everybody wins. But no, it's actually not, as it turns out, a great situation for

Ken: me. It turned out there was a third way. But it is interesting.

Like, if they all go zero, you're in trouble. If they both go All in your love and life. That was a great game by all three of you, Adriana. Congratulations on the win. How does it feel to get one under your belt?

Sarah: Very good. Yeah, [00:14:00] I'll take it even if I had to get it by missing the question.

Ken: I thought that one was tough.

I think you kind of just have to know that he was I don't think I'd ever heard, does that ring a bell for anybody? I

thought I worked it out, especially when they both missed it. I was like, it's Bourbon, I got it, alright! And then you're like, no, his actual dynasty. I'm like, yes, his actual dynasty, right.

And you're like, that's not what they said. And I was like, ah, okay.

Ken: I was trying to hit previously very hard. Like, somebody's going to say Bourbon, so I'm like, one used previously. But, anyway, a tough clue. So, not surprised that it ended up a triple stumper. But well done, Adriana. The lead going into game two on Monday.

Uh, I hope to see another game like that one. That was fantastic, you three. Well done.

Michael: Okay, we also had a great Celebrity Jeopardy matchup last Wednesday in primetime with Chrissy DiStefano, Natalie Morales, and Corbyn Blue. Chris got off to a great start, taking a strong lead into Triple Jeopardy and, uh, making us all laugh in the studio. All three players found a [00:15:00] daily double, spawned a correct knee, but Chrissy It was able to maintain his lead heading into final there, Natalie was the only player to come up with the correct response, and she comes from behind to secure her spot in the semifinals.

Sarah: Yeah, look at these stats. So close. 23 correct for Chrissy, 27 for Natalie. 24 for Corbin. But I also just loved the signature. I don't know if our celebrities are up for these honors awards, but wow, such a good signature from Natalie. And she actually said that she spent a little bit more time practicing the signature than studying.

She said, I love fonts. Does it look good?

Michael: It's very bewitched. It does very bewitched. It looks

Sarah: great. All right, Michael, moving on to this week's host chat. An audience member asked Ken, Do you have a favorite clue from your run?

Ken: The clues are often beautiful little bits of construction. But as a human being, like, All you care about as a player is how it went for you.

So like, the clues I remember is like, you know, the one where I won my first game, I was like, thank goodness, I think I know this, you know. It was about the, the sprinter Marion Jones. Or, uh, [00:16:00] when I won, when I won the greatest of all time tournament, it was about the Shakespeare character, who is not a title character, but has the most lines.

Iago. Like, I don't Normally, I wouldn't be like, yeah, love that clue, but you know, why don't you beat James Holzhauer with a clue? Suddenly, it's a sentimental favorite.

Michael: Wow, well, not from his original run, but from, uh, Goat. That's amazing.

Sarah: I think it's just because he beat James. Yeah, recency bias. I think that's why it won out, yeah.

Well, believe it or not, it's been a big day, Michael, but we have come to the end of the podcast, the end of our work day. Oh, thank

God.

Sarah: We're going to be back tomorrow. Next week to talk about so much more Jeopardy, we've got the TOC finals, we've got pop culture, we've got celebrity. We can never get enough.

Join us next week.

Ken: We're so glad you're here. Stick around and click that subscribe button so you see all our latest [00:17:00] videos.