

Inside J! 1.27.25

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

Michael: Ah, there he is. Johnny Gilbert on the axe, ushering in another episode of Inside Jeopardy, your exclusive and official podcast destination for all things happening in the world of Jeopardy. I'm Michael Davies, joined today by producer Sarah Foss.

Sarah: Well, hello, Michael. So nice to see you back in Los Angeles. We had quite a visit to Seattle, Washington.

Michael: Yes, we went to Seattle, Washington, took Inside Jeopardy live on tour, uh, went to the University of Washington, had a bar trivia night, um, and then did an amazing live show at the Neptune Theatre.

Sarah: Yeah, Moss Bay Hall for the Jeopardy Bar League night was incredible.

So many teams. Sam was a co host along with Jamila, one of the local hosts up there, and, you know, if he wasn't good enough at just reading clues, The way he dances to the final Jeopardy music. I think that might have been the highlight. Yeah, people loved it.

Michael: Uh, that's, [00:01:00] that's alarming. Uh, we should say Sam, Sam is a much bigger star than either of us.

Only eclipsed by Ken Jennings as he should be when we take the show on the road. Um, and also University of Washington, the Huskies. That's, that's a shout out to their quiz bowl team.

Sarah: Yes, they participated in our game. We brought the real buzzers. We had saw a lot of the quiz bowl members and a lot of students.

We were down there in the student union, handing out prizes, taking pictures of Sam and students, but also playing Jeopardy, a game we all love. It was just really great to bring the brand, to bring the show to all different parts of Seattle.

Michael: Yeah, absolutely. And the Neptune theater, wonderful event, probably our biggest, um, Jeopardy live show to date, I'd say.

Sarah: Yeah. And next up, Michael, where are we going next?

Michael: Uh, well, we're going to go to Washington, D. C. Uh, we're still sorting out the dates, we're still sorting out all the details, but we're going to be coming to Washington, D. C. in the spring, sometime around the blooming of the cherry blossoms,

Sarah: uh, I would say.

Time to be there, [00:02:00] yes.

Michael: And it was so nice when we sort of had drinks. Um, uh, after the show, we started sort of plotting out with our, with our small inside Jeopardy team, like where we're going to be going for the rest of the year. And, you know, looking out maybe North Carolina later in the, uh, in the late summer, fall, maybe New York city again later in the year for a very special, kind of a different, um, inside Jeopardy event.

Sarah: Yeah, well, I think you and I both agree getting the show out on the road, getting to meet the people who love this show so much. We know our community is wonderful, but when you really get to be a part of the community and see how much the show means to people, we've got the coolest fans ever.

Michael: Yeah, absolutely.

Sarah: Well, it's an exciting time here, here, because it is in Jeopardy! Airtime. It's here. The tournament of champions, which means last night on YouTube, we had our Jeopardy! honors, our third annual Jeopardy! honors, believe it or not. We handed out some pretty great awards, including our sportsmanship award that [00:03:00] went to Alison Betts.

No surprise. Best interview. Ellen Klages, who could forget the scary ham?

Michael: Wow.

Sarah: Isaac Hirsch. Deserves its

Michael: own series, really, the scary ham. It really does.

Sarah: Yeah. And our social team kind of made it into its own series, but it won an award. Isaac Hirsch for style award, best celebration, Drew Basile. Breakthrough performance, Drew Goins, have to say, that is one.

Best Game Award. We're going to talk about that game coming up. That was one of those semi finals from last week in Champions Wildcard. Many people saying one of the best games in Jeopardy! history. Our MVP, 15 game champion, Adriana Harmeier. And inducted into the Jeopardy! Hall of Fame, our first contestant.

And of course, it had to be our GOAT, Ken Jennings.

Michael: Absolutely. Uh, an amazing congratulations also, Sarah. Um, Jeopardy! honors very much your Baby, and, uh, we, uh, have loved, uh, watching it grow, giving you all the support in the [00:04:00] world, and it was just such a wonderful evening, uh, really fantastic, and coming out, you know, I'd say this post season, you know, now we're finally getting it in its regular place.

Getting towards the cadence that we want, 34 weeks of regular gameplay, 12 weeks of postseason, um, second chance, was superb, champions wildcard, you know, I've been watching that on air, uh, all last week, uh, so good, um, and then, no spoilers, but this TOC is just a, uh, you know, an instant classic.

Sarah: Yeah, and we'll be recording the JIT soon, so the fun just keeps going.

You know, Jeopardy! is all over the world. We know we have brands in, you know, countries across the world. And we want to acknowledge Slovakia because they just celebrated 400 episodes and Ken Jennings was a part of the celebration. Take a look.

Ken: Hey, Slovakia. This is Ken from the original U. S. version of Jeopardy!

Just wanted to congratulate you on 400 episodes of risk. We here's too many

Michael: more to come. Oh, fantastic. [00:05:00] Uh, love all of our fans in Bratislava and all over Slovakia.

Sarah: Yeah. Rescue II. All right. Well, our champions wild card contestants there, they're enjoying this run. People are wanting to hear from them.

They had a maze last week. I think one of the biggest was Drew Gowans. Uh, he had quite a successful AMA. I just want to point out one of his comments. You know, we learned that he loves to surf and bake and blow glass and works out a lot. First audition for Jeopardy at age 19. But one of the first questions that was asked of him was, did you ever imagine Jeopardy would make you a sex symbol of all things?

And Drew's response, You know, I spent a long time coming to terms with the fact that going on Jeopardy wouldn't ensure that I never became a sex symbol, actually. So we're changing the game right now. You know, we're changing it. Andrew, it has done just that.

Michael: Wow. Works out six times a week. Uh, wow. I'm trying to get to those numbers back in the gym myself for the new year.

But that's pretty impressive. No wonder he [00:06:00] looks so good.

Sarah: Yeah, well, he was back on the Alex Trebek stage on Monday, along with Joey DeSena and Jen Feldman, kicking off those wild card semifinal games. Strong start from Drew, saw him in control early, but Jen and Joey did put up a fight. Drew then scored 4,000 on a daily double, the last one in double jeopardy to help secure a very narrow runaway win.

And he is headed to the finals from second chance to the finals, Michael.

Michael: Yeah, you know, I watched this, uh, with a bunch of friends on air this week, this episode. And, you know, what's so amazing when you watch a runaway in a game like this is that Joey and Jen are superb, superb Jeopardy players. And you see a look on their faces towards the end of Double Jeopardy, which is just like, oh, my word.

This guy. This guy is just so good. Um, a great game for being a runaway. A really great game. Great totals at the end of the show for all of them, but Drew a very [00:07:00] worthy finalist in Champions Wildcard.

Sarah: Yeah. And such a nice fellow, you know, he gave the biggest hugs to both of them at the end of that game wearing, of course, that Hawaiian shirt that people wanted to know where can they find it.

It's on his Instagram story. He did the link. If you want to find it, Michael, it's there for you.

Michael: Oh, I don't know that that is exactly my color combination, but, uh, but, uh, thank you. No, it's not navy blue. If it's not navy blue, I'm probably not wearing it. It's true. Big fan of navy.

Sarah: Yes. Well, Ken did catch up with Drew after the big win to see how he was feeling heading into the final.

Ken: That's quite a game, Drew. I mean, what was fun to watch was like, you two were also having great games. Like you almost kept that. Close enough to matter at several points. He's so good with the buzzer.

So watch out,

Ken: everyone else. I was noticing on that dirge clue where we were playing the music, so it was pure reflexes.

Yeah, I mean, that was just wait for the lights. The music clues are so hard because you have no idea when the buzzers are going to open up.

Ken: I mean, that kind of proved like pure reflexes, you're a very [00:08:00] strong player. Is that, uh, is that surfing? Is that athletics?

Yeah, I wish I could say it's surfing, but I'm more the guy wiping out than the guy hitting a barrel.

Ken: You're dressing like a great surfer, and that's what matters. You have this season's record for the most correct responses in a game. You had a 30 buzz game in, uh, 30 correct response game in Second Chance. You actually had 29 today. So, you are also tied for second.

And you're headed to the finals. How does it feel?

Um, it feels crazy, um. I am once again not going to get to enjoy the commissary, which has lovely food, none of which I've been able to eat for nerves, but yeah, I couldn't be more excited. I couldn't have played against better competitors. I want to win it for the three of us.

Ken: Well, I'm sorry you won't be enjoying lunch, but I hope you do enjoy the finals. Thank you. We will see you back here on Thursday. Great game, everybody.

Michael: Two things. One, the set just looks so good on television. And, uh, uh, second thing. [00:09:00] Um, you know, Drew's instincts. His his sort of reaction time on the buzzer could come from his glass blowing.

It may not be from the athletic thing. Could be the glass blowing.

Sarah: I think that could be the secret, Michael. Okay, moving

Michael: on to Tuesday's semi final with Evan Dory, Jay Fisher and Will Yancey. Well, this was more than just a fantastic game. May have been one of the greatest games ever played on the Alex Trebek stage.

It was like a heavyweight fight, the thriller in Manila. Will and Evan were trading punches throughout the match. Evan had the lead in Double Jeopardy when Will Found the first daily double went all in for 10, 800 to earn a commanding lead. But Evan found that last daily double said, All right, I gotta answer it.

True daily double and was correct to steal the lead back from Will, which he maintained heading into final. There, Will was the only player correct for the epic come from behind win, earning him a spot in the finals alongside fellow second chancer, Drew Goins.

Sarah: Yeah, just incredible. No wonder this [00:10:00] one our best game award.

If you didn't have a chance to see it, if you recorded it, you got to watch this one. Also a game with some season record stats. Final score 52, 000 for will the last player to beat that. Oh, none other than Victoria gross Masters champion. She did that in the JIT finals, but just barely with 52, 001. 52, 001.

Final Jeopardy wager 26, 000 from Will, another record this season and daily double 13, 400 from Evan. So this game was just lights out so good. Evan Dory talked about it. What a fun game. Have been excited for people to see it since the moment we finished filming. It was a blast. Jay and Will were a pleasure to share the stage with.

Hope everyone enjoys. And Will Yancey replied, Likewise, brother. I'm thankful to share a stage with you and Jay and even more thankful to be your friend.

Michael: Yeah, I mean, this was just amazing competition and an amazing group of players, um, just really [00:11:00] wonderful to watch and to witness, as we often say, Sarah, sitting there on that stage is like we're lucky enough to have a front, uh, seat.

Sarah: Absolutely. Well, let's hear how these three players were feeling after being a part of one of the best Jeopardy! games ever.

Ken: 52, 000, as I said, the biggest winning total we've had all season. Uh, at the moment you made that big daily double wager, Will, I'm told that was our third. Third biggest daily double wager all year.

However, Evan proceeded to make the biggest daily double wager of the season. Yeah. To take the lead back from you. What a fantastic game. Yeah. Did either of you like second guess the big wagers going all in there? No, I had to.

Yeah, I feel the same way. Once, once he had it, I was like, I, if I want to get back ahead, that's the only way I'm going to do it.

I could have gone less, but I'm like, I'm gonna go big. Go all the way.

Ken: You two were so evenly matched, like the stats line is virtually identical. 23 correct responses on 39 buzzes for Evan, 24 on 38 [00:12:00] correct buzzes for Will. Wow. And the crazy thing is, Jay, you're buzzing up there in the 30s as well, but you must have been frustrated not being able to get in against these two.

I was because

I knew a lot of them, but I just kept either buzzing too early or too late and I kept losing to Evan and Will. So at some point you just got to live with it. So keep trying, keep trying. And eventually I did thankfully get into the, in the positive before the end. So it was, it was fun being a bystander between these two for this game.

Ken: Very relieved. I think Jeopardy fans know how tricky the signaling device is and they can see what a strong player you were. Evan, that was a fantastic game. It was a pleasure to watch. Congratulations to both of you for making. The semifinals and will we have two second chance players so far in the finals.

Congratulations to you. See you back here on Thursday.

Sarah: Well, hard to top Tuesday's game, Michael. But we headed into Wednesday. Another strong semifinal match between Marco Sarek, May Hall, Shaw, Paul Clawson. May Hall took a good lead into double jeopardy, [00:13:00] maintaining it heading into final after dropping to 0.

Paul made an impressive comeback to avoid a runaway. But from third place, Marco was the only one who was correct in final. However, strategic wagering, minimal wager from Mayhal earned him the win and the final spot in the finals.

Michael: Yeah. Mayhal, a sneaky great. Jeopardy player, you know, really, um, really strong.

So focused, just has a lot of those, uh, those qualities that I suddenly see that that that combination of focus and consistency and calm and obviously great intelligence and knowledge to be a really good jeopardy player.

Sarah: Yeah. And the way when he finds those staley doubles, he just says. All of it.

Michael: Yeah.

Sarah: Is there any other answer?

Michael: Is there any other way?

Sarah: I mean, that's the may hallway. He did hop on Reddit saying the three of us had just watched that absolutely smashing semifinal right before. I think we were all thinking how on earth are we going to live up to that [00:14:00] game and I'm not looking forward to playing drew or will or Evan the whole time.

I do want to call out Paul for being one of the most resilient competitors I've ever seen. He went from zero to being in contention at the end in about 20 questions during Double Jeopardy.

Michael: Yeah, that was, that was remarkable. Uh, bounce back ability. Love to see it.

Sarah: And now a quick word 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.

Michael: So on Thursday, we kicked off the two game total point of fair. Your favorite, Sarah. Your favorite with Will Yancey, Drew Goins and Mayhal Shah as expected these three put on quite a show after battling for the lead throughout the game. All three players ended Double Jeopardy with five figure scores.

Mayhal opted for the big final Jeopardy wager, of course, while Drew and Will bet conservatively. Both Mayhal and Drew were correct and Mayhal. Went into day two with a commanding lead.

Sarah: Yeah, as that think music was playing, everyone was noticing that Drew was just kind of doing a little bit of a dance, if you will.

He said, I was so nervous. You know, I'd been second guessing myself all [00:16:00] game, consistently missing out on the buzzer, so I knew I just had to send it with my gut answer, then sway and pray. That's what he calls that move he was doing. And in his head, apparently, he had um, a Jeopardy trap remix. It's done by Chill Bill.

Oh.

Sarah: Go listen to it, Michael. It is so good. And if you listen to it, you'll understand where he was at. He was in a whole different think music.

Michael: I love Jeopardy gone trap. I love it.

Sarah: Yeah, that's the not the Von trap, but the Jeopardy gone trap. That's where we did. Well, Ken did catch up with the players after the game revealed something about Drew's gameplay that our home audience.

Drew,

Ken: I'm not sure if the home audience knows this, but I was thinking about how you're a bit of a wanderer at the Jeopardy! podium.

Someone joked with me that it looks like I'm preparing to do, like, a squat clean, um, in one of the categories. But, um, yeah. Yeah, show us, show us the moves. I, I wander around, I do shakeouts.

I'll do, like, some low squats. You're exploring the space.

Ken: Yeah, exactly. He's making me [00:17:00] tired just watching him. Yeah, how come you're not doing high kicks for us, Will? You don't want to see that. Well, this game was very close up until final, and now there's a little bit of spread, but I'm sure you three have watched enough two game Jeopardy finals to know.

That like, all bets are off, like anything can happen in game two. Uh, like what's your attitude coming in from third, Will? Um, do the best I can. And be aggressive, see if I can catch back up. How do you feel about that lead, Mehal?

Mehal: Not

Ken: great. It was bigger. It's not the safe kind of lead, is that what you're saying?

Mehal: There's no safe lead with these guys.

Ken: All right. Well that was a great game, that was fun to watch, and good luck to all three of you in game two. A

Michael: Will's Voice. It just, I, it's like it, it's like a pacifier for me. It's like it both calms me down and makes me go to sleep and cuddle up. I just love it.

Sarah: I know I love these finalists.

Such great personalities and such great players. They returned on Friday for the conclusion of Champions Wild Card. Drew took a good lead into [00:18:00] double jeopardy, but then quickly dropped \$3,400 on the first daily double handing the lead off to May Hall, which he continued to add to \$4,000 on the last daily double.

Extending it far enough to effectively be a runaway in the two game total point of fair. And he earns a spot in the tournament of champions, but not the only spot because drew was our runner up and because Lisa and cannot participate this year, we're going to see both drew and may hall in the TOC. That starts today.

Michael: Yeah. Disappointed not to have Lisa Ann make it. Delighted for Drew but disappointed not to see Lisa Ann make it because of her production schedule on Abbott Elementary. We of course have invited her to come back next year so it could be a two celebrity year on TOC. We'll have to see what happens.

Sarah: I love it.

Well, right after May Hall claimed the victory, we came right here to the pod studio for Michael and I to have a chance to see how he was feeling. Take a listen. We are here with May Hall, who has [00:19:00] just clinched a victory in Champions Wildcard, headed to the TOC moments ago. Has it sunk in yet for you?

Mehal: No, it's probably not going to sink in for like at least half a day.

I'll be on my flight back to Seattle and it's all of a sudden going to hit me and I'll break down in my seat.

Michael: I love that. You definitely had a moment when, when Ken You know, there is, there is moment. I say there's equity all the time when, when Ken says, and you're a Jeopardy champion, the first time you hear it, it must be something, but to hear it at the end of this tournament, which you've been preparing for, you've had the lead up for, you know, the quality of the competition that must hit a little different.

Mehal: It

Michael: hits a little different. I

Mehal: think the one thing that really hits different is, you know, you spend all this time with these other champions in, The green room and then the other green room, you really get to know them and now I feel like I get to represent the Wild Cards in the tournament.

Sarah: We've always talked about Jeopardy!

production time, Jeopardy! air time, in JPT, obviously we've just finished Champions Wild Card, but in Jeopardy! air time, No one [00:20:00] even knows who you are yet your games were coming to you on November 13th Your games don't start airing until next week.

Mehal: Yeah, I think that watch party is gonna be extra weird for me

Sarah: I bet a secret you're keeping not only the secret that you're gonna win two games But that you're gonna come back for champions wildcard and you're inevitably gonna make it to the TOC.

Mehal: Yeah You know, it's fun not to tell people things, I think.

Sarah: Especially when the surprise you're keeping is such a good one.

Mehal: Yeah, I think so.

Sarah: Now, did you know about Champions Wildcard when you came and competed? Because, obviously, it's only something we've done for the past couple of seasons, this being the second one we've ever done.

So, with two wins, did you think, Alright, at least I know I'm coming back to the Alex Trebek stage.

Mehal: I did not think I was a guarantee to come. I thought I might come back. I thought the fact that I played, like, really aggressively in my, uh, My second game would kind of work in my favor, but it wasn't a sure thing for me at all.

Sarah: So did you then prepare? Have you been, like, keeping, you know, in the Jeopardy preparation mode up until you got the call and then, obviously, after you got the call, [00:21:00] I'm sure, as well. The

Mehal: time in between, uh, I lost and I got the wild card. I wasn't doing any prep. Because I also didn't realize what the timeline was going to be, so I

thought like, if I was going to get a wild card, you guys would call me in the springtime or something.

So, you know, I was like, you know, I'll take a break from trivia, I'll, uh, maybe focus on doing my job for a change, uh, so. It was, it was definitely a surprise to be like, Hey, you're coming back time to start studying again. Uh, so it was a bit of a shock.

Michael: Well, you've had almost a lifetime of preparation in one of your interviews.

Um, uh, today you talked about the sixth grade teacher who introduced you or told you, uh, I think you're gonna, I think you have a talent for this. Mayhal, I think you could, you could do this. So obviously this has been a long life of preparation.

Mehal: Yeah, let me tell you a little more about him. So his name is Tom Lucia and I believe he's now retired.

Um, so the very first thing he would do to the 6th grade social studies class was he would give them a blank map and he would challenge everyone, label as many countries as [00:22:00] you can. You know, if you don't know any, don't label any, but like, do your best and then no matter what you put, he'd then set a target for you for the end of the year just so you would know how much you could improve and you know, I, you know, I was a sixth grader.

I wasn't the most studious person. Um, so, you know, I just messed around and I put down like 75 countries on there and I figured he'd be like, Oh, wow, that's so amazing. Like that's, yeah, You know, great. You don't need to improve anywhere from 75. And he was like, no, I think you can do, uh, 125 by, by the end of the year.

And I did 143 and he like graded it, but like 143 and wow, capital letters at the top. And I still have that exam to this day. But

to start out at 75 in sixth grade, that's pretty impressive.

Mehal: Yeah. I mean, I, I love maps. Uh, I used to just have some in my, in my bedroom. I used to just kind of look at them and think about other places in the world and what it's like there.

Um, and so some of it just kind of sunk its way into my head.

Michael: [00:23:00] But if I had to give you a nickname on this show, my nickname for you would be Mr. Consistent. Really? Um, your, your stats is like Very little variation, like whoever the competition is, you stay in this realm of sort of 20 plus correct responses.

Um, only in the second final today did you hit below that with 19 against superior competition. And also, you're probably not taking an enormous amount of risk when you're in the back half, when you're playing a lead on a, on a two game total point of fair, but so consistent. I do notice when you play, also, you stay very calm and very zen throughout the game.

I don't know if underneath, you're paddling like hell, that it's a lot more going on, but you seem very calm when you play this game.

Mehal: I seem very calm, I guess.

Michael: Um, you know,

Mehal: you're a Bills fan.

Michael: Yes, love the Buffalo Bills.

Mehal: Um. I, I love watching Josh Allen play with that certain amount of, uh, recklessness and controlled chaos.

Yeah, running

Michael: the ball on third down.

Mehal: Yeah, [00:24:00] just, just, you know, if you gotta jump over someone, you jump over someone. Um, so, you know, I, I, I, but like, you know, it looks like chaos, but like, he's in control. He knows what he's doing, at least sometimes. And, uh, that's what I hope to bring to the stage.

Sarah: Now you also earned some pretty cool stats.

You know, we're, we're halfway through practically of season 41 already. You've got the second biggest daily double of the season, that was in your original run, 13, 200. Of course, Evan Dory beat that, 13, 400 in Champions Wildcard. Most buzzer attempts all season, 47. And you've actually done that twice. Once in your initial run, and once in the final of game one.

And then you also have the highest double Jeopardy score of the whole season, 37, 600 from your original run. So, that's gotta give you some confidence heading into TOC.

Mehal: Yeah, it feels good. Like, that high double Jeopardy score was from a game where I think I had Two Daily Doubles, and I went all in on both of them, and it just, it [00:25:00] felt right.

It felt like the right way to play the game.

Sarah: I know in the finals, you didn't go all in, you know, and hit I know you regret it, but it really has kind of been something we've come to know for, from you. That you're just like, alright, all of it, True Daily Double.

Mehal: I mean, people talk about it like it's a risky thing, but, um, I mean, there's, there's risk in not betting aggressively.

There's, you're risking that your competitors are going to outbuzz you, or you're gonna stumble in some other way. And, you know, I, I know from practice, I have a hit rate of about 75 percent on daily doubles. And so, if I have a 75 percent chance to lock it up, I'm gonna lock it up.

Michael: Yeah, no, that, that, those percentages, uh, ring true, because if you're buzzing in 47 47 attempts per game on 60 clues.

Um, that means you're pretty confident, you know, more than 75 percent of the answers, you know, so it's, uh, that's, that's pretty indicative. Now you have. Less time to prepare than any other TOC. What is preparation going to look like for you from over the [00:26:00] next couple of weeks?

Mehal: Oh God. Um, I don't know, like, you say that I don't have a lot of time to prep, but like, I prepped for my first taping, and I prepped for this taping, and I feel like a lot of it's going to carry over, so.

And you're fresh. You're fresh. You will have been,

Sarah: you know, the player who played the most recently in

Michael: Trebek

Mehal: mean, that's definitely a thing, like, you had both of the second chance people who made it to the finals. Yes. And I think everyone in the room thought that those two people were going to be the strongest contenders, uh, in this go around.

Michael: I tell you the other thing I've got to say and thank you for being such a huge part of it and being champion of a great tournament and talking about the fraternity, the sorority that is shared between our players in this tournament. I know that there is a, a, a, a school of people out there who think, Oh, why do we do all these tournaments?

Why do we have them? We really have a very limited postseason. What this is going to be by the time we get there is about 34 to 35 weeks [00:27:00] of regular season, about 11 to 12 weeks of postseason jeopardy. Watching. All of you play this game against each other at such a high level and with such amazing sportsmanship and companionship, comradeship between all of you.

It is phenomenal. Some of the games we saw and you witnessed them over the last few days have just been extraordinary. Yeah,

Mehal: you know, it's funny you talk about sportsmanship. Um, so, you know, you and I, we both love sports I would say the the sport that like emotionally gets me is Little League Baseball And specifically like the speech a coach gives to his players after they lose And like the the one I'm gonna call out is a speech given by His name is Dave Belisle and he's the coach of a a Rhode Island Little League team that almost made it to the, uh, the World Series, uh, Little League World Series one year.

And, you know, after they lost his, he got his team together and he said, you know, people love fighters, they love people who play [00:28:00] the game right, and they love good sportsmen. And, uh, I think that's what we all are here. Yeah. And so, uh, I'm just really glad to have been a part of it.

Michael: Yeah, and both winning and losing, it's just playing the game is the thing that becomes really important.

Mehal: Everyone loses. Yeah.

Michael: That's

Mehal: the thing.

That's the thing about Jeopardy, yes. Everyone's

Mehal: gonna lose. Yeah. And that's okay. Yeah.

So what's been the best part, if you had to sum it up, of your Jeopardy! journey so far?

Mehal: So I think you guys talked on this podcast a little while ago about post Jeopardy! syndrome.

And I think it was inspired by a Reddit post that someone made about it. It was. There was a really good comment that someone made where they were like, Jeopardy! is a side quest in your life. Let's kind of dig into that a bit. Cause like, you know, a side quest in a role playing game, it's like, the main quest is like, you gotta save the princess from the dragon, blah, blah, blah.

And the side quest is, you gotta find a hundred turnips and bring them to a farmer. And so like, Jeopardy's like, in the side quest category. But in a side quest, you learn new skills. And you grow confident. [00:29:00] And, I'm walking away, I mean, I'm not walking away yet, but like, as a part of being this, I feel like I've developed a new appreciation for the world.

Like, I was never that into art. And now, like, I had to study a lot of art. I had to, like, memorize a lot of things here and there, but, like, I also kind of like art now. And I kind of like opera. And, uh, I feel more confident in myself as a person. And, um, you know, just being here and being a part of the game has really helped all of that.

So, like, it's a side quest, but, like, I'm a better person for this side quest. Wow,

Michael: that's so good. I mean, uh, I'm gonna, I'm gonna take some of that, listen to it again, and maybe, uh, write it down and frame that on my, uh, office wall. I feel a lot of the times that the thing that makes Jeopardy so special and, um, I don't think I really realized it until I worked here, but it's the quality of the writing and what we write, what we decide to write about and the quality of the writing and what we write about.

I've had the same experience. I love [00:30:00] history, but if there's one area in history that I'm a little weaker, it's classical history. And I've, I've, I have Doven, I have dived into it and, um, and let that all wash over me and I've loved that and Jeopardy really introduced me to that was my area of weakness. I had to get into it.

I had to learn no more about it. And I think it's the writing that can inspire so many people, players, viewers and producers even, uh, to just get out there, open a book, listen to a podcast, figure out, learn more about, about something that you don't know about.

Sarah: Well, we are very excited to welcome you to the TOC field.

It's going to be fun more than anything. I hope you know how fun it's going to be. And we'll see you then.

Michael: What a good guy, a worthy winner of a great champions wildcard tournament. And let's see how it all goes starting tonight on the TOC. Wow.

Sarah: Well, we had some more Jeopardy going on last week. We had Celebrity Jeopardy as well, Michael.

Michael: Yeah, and Pop Culture Jeopardy. There's so much Jeopardy everywhere. [00:31:00] Yeah, let's head back to Wednesday in primetime for our third Celebrity Jeopardy quarterfinal game of this season featuring Rachel Brosnahan, Seth Green and Margaret Cho. This game was all Margaret Cho. Wow. What a Jeopardy player. 41 correct responses, three correct daily doubles, two of which were all in true daily doubles.

She so clearly won. Watches the show was told as she watches the show and proved it with her gameplay. Um, she had a triple jeopardy score of 47, 100, earned her the no doubt runaway win in one of the most impressive performances in primetime celebrity jeopardy history.

Sarah: Yeah, fans were so impressed by Margaret, as were all of us watching it.

We couldn't believe it. A lot of comparisons between her and Ike Barinholtz. Yeah. Now, you've mentioned the record for the triple Jeopardy score. That was the third highest, but she also had a record for the biggest correct daily double 18, 600 beating Ike's record of 16, 700 and the fourth [00:32:00] highest final score of all time, 54, 100 for Celebrity Jeopardy.

So really, really impressive. She's headed to the semifinals, but Rachel and Seth both receiving 30, 000 for their worthy charities. That's Covenant House, New York for Rachel and LA Food Bank for Seth. All right, Michael, it is time for this week's host chat with Ken, an audience member asked him. Do you have any input on the clues?

Ken: You know, we have a very, uh, experienced and talented group of writers. Uh, some of them are here at the judges table. They're very smart. They have a lot of, uh, words to produce every day. Jeopardy! has a lot of text. Um, but Alex would occasionally You know, if he saw something funny on vacation, you know, something, he's at the Grand Canyon, and he sees a fact, or if he has an idea for a category, he might bring it to the writers, and I do the same thing.

I have a, I'm a notes app on my phone. If something occurs to me, I'll jot that down, and then I'll, I'll email it to the writers, and they may pretend to be, uh, appreciative. Thanks, Ken. We got this. [00:33:00] But they're the best. They are the engine that makes Jeopardy work.

Sarah: Yeah, I think I get that same reaction from the writers sometimes.

Yeah, yeah, Sarah. We'll have that right up for you.

Michael: Yeah. Talking of the writers, um, you know, uh, really congratulations to all of them for the, um, nominations for the WGA awards. You know, there is a category for audience participation, quiz shows, game shows. Um, you know, this has been a category which is, um, which somehow the Jeopardy writers have.

Only one once in 2014, um, when I think it was first made a category at the WGA Awards. Um, many nominations since, but, but, but many losses, and as very often the jokers, the writers, traipse off to the ceremony as we're going to lose again. Um, this year the nominations came out, and remarkably, there are only two nominations in the category.

Um, and one is for the writers of Jeopardy, and the other one is for the writers of pop culture Jeopardy. So, a guaranteed win. Uh, for our writers, slightly different writing teams between the [00:34:00] two shows, but lots of crossover and Billy and Michelle, uh, are the head writers on, on both shows. Um, I've of course made a joke in my sort of internal announcement, like it's a guaranteed win, like no one's gonna win.

Colin Jost, who I spoke to this morning, uh, said to me on the phone that he had, uh, written to Billy and Michelle congratulating them on the guaranteed win. And Michelle, in her inimitable style, had written back, ah, yes, but of course we are also guaranteed losers.

Sarah: Ah, yes, see?

Michael: I know.

Sarah: Well, and I love that they go every year.

This year they're going to go knowing they walk away with some hardware, but they go every year and that is the spirit and just that makes up what our writers are all about.

Michael: Absolutely.

Sarah: Well, Michael, that brings us to the end of today's episode, believe it or not.

Michael: Already?

Sarah: I know, it went so fast. Yes,

Michael: it did.

Sarah: But we're going to be back next week to discuss this first week of TOC that kicks off today. We have Alison Betts, Will Wallace, and Rishabh Wuppalapati going against each other, hoping for a spot in the semifinals. We're also going to highlight next week's [00:35:00] Celebrity Jeopardy, or actually the one this Wednesday, Roy Wood Jr.

Brian Jordan Alvarez, Phoebe Robinson. You're going to want to check that out on ABC. Three new episodes of Pop Culture Jeopardy! air on Prime Video on Wednesday. Keep watching. See you all next week.

Ken: Ta ra.