



This is Jeopardy: The Story of America's Favorite Quiz Show

Episode Eleven: The Hardest Quiz Night in the Country, aka O'Brien's

A Production of Sony Music Entertainment, and Sony Pictures TV

Buzzy Cohen: How's it going, Mark?

Mark May: Doing well. How are you doing?

Buzzy Cohen: I'm good.

Mark May: It took a couple of podcast producers to get you to come out and join us. Nice.

Buzzy Cohen: Am I on this team, Marty? Do I have a team?

Marty Butterick: A team, yes. We could split up if you would prefer, but...

Buzzy Cohen: I want to play with you!

Buzzy Cohen: It's a Wednesday evening, a few minutes after 8 PM, and I'm in Santa Monica on the west side of Los Angeles.

Buzzy Cohen: You got us a spot? Okay. Should I quickly say hello to some of our friends?

Dan Donahue: Buzzword, what's going on?

Buzzy: Good to see you.

Buzzy Cohen: I've just walked into a crowded bar a few blocks from the beach with two of my producers in tow.

Dan Donahue: Are you here in an official producorial capacity?

Buzzy: I guess so, yeah.

Friend: I mean, that's a fancy little recording device you have there.

Buzzy Cohen: Those are my friends, drawing attention to our recording equipment. They're ribbing me, but it is true — I've been here many times, but up until now, never with a microphone.

Mark May: Hey! Good to see you.

Buzzy Cohen: Good to see you too.

Mark May: You're gonna, you're gonna have to come by later. Uh, Dileep's on his way, he's gonna want to say hey.

Buzzy Cohen: Okay. Yes, I will come by.

Buzzy Cohen: This is O'Brien's Irish Pub at 2226 Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica.

In almost every way, it's a typical bar. When you walk in, you see a long bartop. There's lots of wood paneling along the walls. People are huddled around high-top tables, packed into leather booths along the edges of the room...ordering burgers and fries, or fish and chips.

But tonight is Wednesday, and groups are consolidating into teams...getting ready for what seems like a typical trivia night. Well, except for one thing...

Rob Salerno: Uh, hi, I'm Rob Salerno. Uh, I was on *Jeopardy!* four years ago and I won a game and, uh, it was the best day of my life.

Lynn Yu: My name's Lynn Yu. I was on *Jeopardy!* on Season 36, which was Alex Trebek's final season.

Jeff Richmond: I'm Jeff Richmond. I was on the show in Season 5, a mere 35 years ago.

C. Rob Dimitri: Uh, my name is C. Robert Dimitri. I was on *Jeopardy!* five years ago. I won one game. I lost one game. It was a lot of fun. That's all.

MUSIC: Whimsical spacey music begins

Buzzy Cohen: Yes...you heard that correctly. Almost every person around me...they've all been on *Jeopardy!*

Pam Mueller: O'Brien's has a reputation of being the place that *Jeopardy!* alums go. Or if you're in town to tape *Jeopardy!*, you should come to this because it's, you know, the toughest pub quiz in town.

Buzzy Cohen: In the last few decades, O'Brien's has become a gathering ground for former champs. We'll hear more about that in a bit.

But what you need to know now is that a big group of *Jeopardy!* alumni regularly attend O'Brien's Wednesday night pub quiz. And I am one of them.

See, being on *Jeopardy!* is unforgettable. And it's hard to describe, really, until you've made your way on and off of Stage 10. You could even say it takes a certain kind of person...

Monya De: I think everyone here possesses a level of nerdiness that is not often found in, you know, in society. And sometimes you kind of keep that part of yourself a little bit hidden away and you kind of conform to whatever the norm is...

Buzzy Cohen: For many of us, a love of *Jeopardy!* is deeply rooted, going back generations.

Dan O'Keefe: Yeah, so my grandpa was on the '91 Seniors' Tournament. Uh, he came in second place on it. The headline in our local paper after that was *Local Man Loses*, uh, which is the, you know, the best way to celebrate, uh, anyone.

Buzzy Cohen: To be clear: not everyone at O'Brien's has been on *Jeopardy!*...yet. A few are still waiting to get "The Call."

Alison Betts Goldman: Hi, my name is Alison Betts and I'm currently in the *Jeopardy!* pool. Um, I have been since June of this year, and this is my third time swimming in the pool. So hopefully this is the time that I finally make it onto the stage.

Buzzy Cohen: For others, *Jeopardy!* is just one game show they've appeared on among many.

Dan Avila: I've been on 10 game shows. *Jokers Wild. Sale of the Century. Break the Bank, Who Wants to be a Millionaire? Greed...* PBS had a, uh, science show called *Nova. Scattergories. And...that dumb one — Hollywood Connection, that's probably, that's probably ten. So yeah, that's my resume.*

Buzzy Cohen: Whether you're a *Jeopardy!* champion or hopeful, a game show regular, or just someone who enjoys trivia, O'Brien's is the place to be this Wednesday night.

THEME MUSIC

Buzzy Cohen: I'm your host, Buzzy Cohen. And from Sony Music Entertainment and Sony Pictures TV, This Is Jeopardy! The Story of America's Favorite Quiz Show.

This week...the smartest trivia players in the country get together and write their own pub quiz.

ACT I

MUSIC: reflective whimsical music

Buzzy Cohen: In 2017, after I won the Tournament of Champions, I went to O'Brien's for the very first time.

Actually, two other *Jeopardy!* champs — really, *Jeopardy!* legends — invited me: Pam Mueller and Jerome Vered.

O'Brien's quickly became part of my weekly routine. At the time, I was traveling a lot for work and I would get home late enough that my wife and kids were already asleep or going to bed...so oftentimes, I would just go straight to O'Brien's from the airport.

Over the years, I built a ton of great memories at O'Brien's. For example, one time I played on a team with Alan Lin and Austin Rogers — my former competitors from the finals of the 2017 Tournament of Champions.

The first time that we had met, we were on the *Jeopardy!* stage together, duking it out for \$250,000. But that time, at O'Brien's, we played on the same team...and embarrassingly, we came in 3rd place.

For many of us, O'Brien's is like common ground. It's the place contestants can come together — face old foes again, except this time, as friends.

Pam Mueller: Hi, my name is Pam Mueller.

Buzzy Cohen: To tell the story of O'Brien's, I first need to introduce you to Pam Mueller.

Pam Mueller: I was first on Jeopardy in 2000, and I've been back for several tournaments since then.

Buzzy Cohen: Several tournaments...that's kind of an understatement. Pam first won the College Championship when she was still a teenager. And she's also competed in two Tournament of champions, the Battle of the Decades, and the All-Star Team Games.

Like many of us, Pam was a *Jeopardy!* fan long before she played the game.

Pam Mueller: *Jeopardy!* airs in the middle of the afternoon in Chicago, so it was a great after-school activity. I would sometimes watch at my friend's house 'cause her dad was really into it. Um, and they also had the *Jeopardy!* game for the Nintendo, which I thought was pretty cool.

Buzzy Cohen: When Pam tried out for the College Championship, she was majoring in psychology at Loyola University in Chicago.

In those days, you had to send *Jeopardy!* a postcard to get called in for an audition. Details are a little blurry more than twenty years later, but...

Pam Mueller: If I had to guess, I would say that I probably had like an X-Files postcard from, like, the X-Files Convention, and I probably sent that because I feel like the X-Files was a big part of my personality in that era.

Buzzy Cohen: Jury is still out on whether Pam is more of a Dana Scully or a Fox Mulder.

The night before the audition, Pam drove from Chicago to St. Louis with her mom. They went out for a dinner of toasted ravioli...and in the morning, Pam looked at the outfit in her suitcase.

Pam Mueller: It's like a little lavender twin set with, like, flowers around the neck, uh, and like a black skirt. But I realized that I had not packed any shoes to match. I just had, like, the gym shoes I'd worn yesterday, and I was like, *Oh no.*

Am I gonna wear gym shoes with this outfit or am I gonna borrow a pair of my mom's, like sandals that she's wearing. But her feet are like three sizes bigger than mine. So I went with a three-sizes-too-big sandals, and just like, you know, tried not to walk very much when I was at the audition.

Buzzy Cohen: Shout out to Pam's mom, and really, just shout out to moms everywhere!

After she passed her audition, Pam flew out west...to the University of Washington campus, where the College Championship was taking place that year.

The big day came...

ARCHIVAL:

Johnny Gilbert: From the University of Washington in Seattle. This is the 2000 Jeopardy! College Championship...

Pam Mueller: My first thought, I guess, when we went downstairs the first morning, you know, we're all in our college sweatshirts, was...*Oh, I'm gonna lose to the guy from Harvard [Laughs]. Which is maybe not the great attitude to take into your first Jeopardy taping. Um, and as it turned out, I was right.*

ARCHIVAL:

Johnny Gilbert: Here are today's contestants. From Bowling Green, Ohio, now a junior at George Washington University, John Williams. From Willamette, Illinois, now a junior at Loyola University, Pam Mueller. And from Cincinnati, Ohio, now a sophomore at Harvard University, Jonah Nobler.

And now here is the host of Jeopardy!, Alex.

Buzzy Cohen: Okay, so the guy from Harvard beat Pam the first time they faced off, but she got him back in a subsequent game...and emerged victorious.

ARCHIVAL:

Alex Trebek: The portrait of this living woman was moved from the contemporary section to history. 30 seconds. Good luck.

Pam, you had 9,000, did you think of the Queen Mom? You thought of Margaret Thatcher instead. Former Prime Minister of Great Britain, and you came up with the correct response.

Pam Mueller: Oh really?

Alex Trebek: Oh really? Yeah. So you now have \$11,000 worth that \$2,000 wager.

Buzzy Cohen: When Pam went back to school, her friends had one thing on their minds.

Pam Mueller: *When I called them to tell them I won, they were like, Oh, we can buy more nachos! Which is like the most college thing they could possibly say.*

Buzzy Cohen: They did indeed buy nachos, but *Jeopardy!* also gave Pam a car.

Pam Mueller: *I think mostly just, like, having the financial cushion enabled me to do things in the next, like, few years after college that were not maybe as remunerative as some other positions might have been.*

Buzzy Cohen: For the rest of her student days, Pam's *Jeopardy!* experience was what others remembered her for.

Pam Mueller: *It became a huge part of who I was on the college campus. You know, it was like, Oh, that's the Jeopardy! girl, et cetera, et cetera.*

Buzzy Cohen: She really thought that was the end of it.

Pam Mueller: *This is a chapter of my life that is closed. This is a really cool souvenir. You know, I will have this forever and that will remind me of this really cool thing I did when I was in college.*

Buzzy Cohen: But as we know, that was just the beginning.

ARCHIVAL:

Johnny Gilbert: She won the 2000 College Championship, and is now a graduate student at Princeton University. Here's Pam Mueller. [Applause.]

An entering law student originally from Chicago, Illinois, Pam Mueller, who yesterday won ten thousand dollars.

Buzzy Cohen: Yep, you heard that right — Pam has not one, but two graduate degrees, and they're both from Ivy League schools. Not too shabby.

She was attending the second one, Harvard Law, when she first heard about O'Brien's, a pub quiz happening nearly 3,000 miles away.

A few other *Jeopardy!* alums had reached out to Pam, and they'd asked her to write some of the quiz material. Despite the distance — and a full course load — she took up the task.

Pam Mueller: I was sort of enmeshed in this community despite not living there full-time for many, many years. Um, Just visiting relatively often. Um, but then I moved to LA after grad school in 2015 and, you know, then started going to O'Brien's pretty much every week. And, you know, being even more a part of the community to the extent that, at this point it would, feels really hard to give it up if I wanted to, if I wanted to move elsewhere.

MUSIC: Slow building reflective beat begins

Buzzy Cohen: It's been 23 years since Pam first competed on Jeopardy. And now, standing in the middle of O'Brien's, she reflects back on all of it.

Pam Mueller: I didn't know it was gonna be such a big part of my life, but you know, it's been there for more than half of my life, which is crazy.

Buzzy Cohen: All of those times she was on the show? They amount to just a few days...memorable days, for sure, but O'Brien's is what has truly lasted.

It's become a part of her everyday routine. The regularity of it has created lifelong relationships, and good, dependable fun.

Pam and a circle of others take turns writing fresh quiz material for every Wednesday night. O'Brien's is like a cooperative. Everyone pitches in in different ways.

Pam Mueller: What do I have on my screen here? I have a spreadsheet with 25 teams. It is a very busy evening at O'Brien's.

Buzzy Cohen: Tonight, Pam's keeping score, standing behind a table stacked with papers and pens, with her laptop fully juiced.

Pam Mueller: I have to write down the scores from the handouts. Um, total this all up. People will come up and check their scores 'cause some people are trying to keep us honest. Um, and then I have the pleasure of reading out the scores.

MUSIC: String beat with momentum begins

Muffy Marracco: Muffy Marracco, 1992 Jeopardy! Teen Tournament.

Vamsi Adusumilli: Hi, I'm Vamsi. I was on the first episode of the 2012 season when Alex Trebek had just come back from a heart attack. Um, so that was special. and I won that first game, uh, and then I lost. But, uh, it was, uh, pretty cool being able to be there and he got that whole heartfelt, uh, welcome back and that was special.

Mark May: And, and I'm Mark May. I have not been on *Jeopardy!* yet, although I've had multiple auditions, but I was the host at O'Brien's Pub Quiz when the first set of *Jeopardy!* players came to it, had a good time, told other people, and this is what it's grown to since then.

Buzzy Cohen: The night is young...it's a quarter past eight, and the quiz is about to start.

<O'Briens Pub Ambi>

Buzzy Cohen: Standing next to Pam is Patrick Friel, tonight's quizmaster. Patrick is a two-time *Jeopardy!* champion. He's poker-faced and serious in his role.

Pam and Patrick definitely write some of the hardest quizzes, and one of the questions that Patrick wrote is my favorite all-time pub quiz question.

It is: name four of the nine countries that have a subway — as in metro — but no Subway — as in sandwich shop.

In case you're interested, at the time Patrick wrote the quiz, those nine countries were:

North Korea, Iran, Algeria, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Belarus.

Patrick Friel: We are out of pens, but maybe you can borrow a pen from a team that has extras. Really only one person needs to write at a time. And in the next couple of minutes, if you would like to play, think of a team name, and then come up here to submit your team name and get a team number.

Buzzy Cohen: Our team name is, um, the Friel Housewives of Santa Monica, playing on our quiz master's name, Patrick Friel. And we are a team of three, which is...puts us a little bit under...we don't have a good chance.

Buzzy Cohen: So, the two friends I'm playing with — they've both been on *Jeopardy!*, too.

Dan Donahue, a semifinalist in the 2013 College Championship.

Dan Donahue: I'm a professional magician. Part-time, you know? Yeah. [Laughs.] And, uh, it doesn't have health benefits, but it's still a pretty good gig.

Buzzy Cohen: And Marty Butterick, a terrific trivia player who was on *Jeopardy!* in 2011.

And actually, Marty's doing double duty tonight.

Marty Butterick: We have devices on the table that are open and active, and typically that's not something that happens, but we stream our quiz online along with playing it here. And so I'm doing live scoring for all of the online teams. So it's very helpful to have Dan and Buzzy concentrating on the questions, 'cause I'm only halfway here.

Buzzy Cohen: Next up...get ready...the quiz gets downright hard.

Dan Donahue: Uh, so what are some...*Sound and the Fury*? Give me, gimme some Faulkner titles here.

Buzzy Cohen: *Absalom, Absalom?*

Dan: *Absalom?* Yeah.

Buzzy Cohen: After the break...why O'Brien's?

ACT II

MUSIC: Optimistic beat begins

Buzzy Cohen: What happens when you gather the country's finest trivia minds and let them loose on a pub quiz?

Well, let me walk you through the format of an O'Brien's quiz.

It's two rounds total...of 15 questions each. In round one, you've got two minutes to answer. In round two, you've got just one a minute.

And...these are not easy questions...thanks, in part, to this guy.

Patrick Friel: My name is Patrick Friel. We are here at the O'Brien's, uh, pub quiz in Santa Monica, and I am hosting tonight. We have like 26 teams or something, and it's a bit hectic.

Buzzy Cohen: Teams play in groups of up to five.

Some of the team names tonight include:

MUSIC: Whimsical spacey music begins:

Hopefully Not Last. Alvin and the Chip Shortages. Nothing Nowhere None of the Time. The Ivy League. Footloose and Fancy Friel. Leeroy Jenkins. The HR Violation. And Two People Drinking.

Patrick Friel: In Greek myth, the Oenetrophae — Spermo, Oeno, and Elais — were a group of sisters, each of whom could magically produce a different variety of food or drink. My question is: which three items did they produce?

Patrick Friel: A sidereal day is the amount of time it takes for the Earth to rotate on its axis relative to the stars. Because Earth is moving through its orbit, this period is slightly shorter than 24 hours.

To the nearest minute, how much shorter than 24 hours is Earth's sidereal day? And since your answer will be a number, please make it crystal clear what is your...

Buzzy Cohen: The quizmaster is on the mic — his voice is booming out questions into the farthest corners of the bar.

Patrick Friel: Question number 12. A man with a given name Joseph, who was an innovator in film comedy. A man with the given name Clarence, who was an Olympic swimmer. A man with the given name James, who boxed in the 1980s and 1990s. And another James, an entrepreneur who died earlier this month. What do they all have in common?

Buzzy Cohen: It's halftime at O'Brien's pub quiz. The place is packed. We check in with the teams...see how folks are feeling.

Mia Warren: How's it going over here at the half time?

Dan Donahue: Uh, we are in fifth place, which is, you know, pretty good for only three people I think, you know?

Player: I'm really proud of the Glen Gary Bob Ross. 'Cause we figured that one out. We didn't know that previously.

Dan Avila: These are tough questions, but then we expect that from Patrick, 'cause Patrick's one of the best players here and he's really good at writing questions and he is really challenging to us.

Player: We got the wrong Irish author, the wrong stream of consciousness Irish author. We put, we put James Joyce. The correct answer was, uh, Beckett.

Player: Big Sam Beckett.

Player: Yeah, disastrous.

MUSIC: Fast moving beat with energy

Dan Donahue: The questions have to be quite a bit harder than Jeopardy. And I think we've experienced that tonight.

Marty Butterick: I mean, this is typically known as the hardest quiz in the United States.

Buzzy Cohen: Yeah — O'Brien's draws in a lot of Jeopardy contestants...but it's decidedly *not* Jeopardy. Here's Pam Mueller again.

Pam Mueller: Jeopardy is very broad and, you know, it can go deep, but O'Brien's, I think, tends to have quirkier questions. Things that, you know, you couldn't solve necessarily in, you know, the 10 seconds you have for a *Jeopardy!* question.

Buzzy Cohen: The types of questions you get at O'Brien's...they're maybe...a little more obscure. Less general knowledge and more trivia.

Here's an example. One of the rounds tonight is called "Double Booked." The quizmaster mixes together the plots of two different books, and the teams have to come up with a Before-and-After style answer that satisfies that mixed-up plot.

Dan Donahue: This one here says: **The Nihilist, Yevgény Bazárov, befriends Paul Morrell, who is overly attached to his mother. So the Nihilist is from Fathers and Sons by Turgenev. And then Paul Morrell is from Sons and Lovers from D.H. Lawrence. So it's Fathers and Sons and Lovers.**

Unlike *Jeopardy!*, you have a bit more time to mull over your answers. Of course, that comes with a fair amount of self-doubt, too.

Player: I officially accept that I am not as smart as I previously thought.

Buzzy Cohen: But working in teams is always nice. I mean, who doesn't love a group project?

Marty Butterick: Well, the good news is...

Buzzy Cohen: We got zero.

Dan Donahue: We were a hundred percent wrong.

Buzzy Cohen: We were a hundred percent wrong!

Marty Butterick: There's gonna be a lot of silence here while I'm thinking.

Buzzy Cohen: While I'm thinking Marty is staring a hole in my forehead and I'm just looking blankly back at him.

Here's the thing. This is what winning feels like. Every time I play this quiz, it feels like you are failing, especially a Patrick quiz or a Pam quiz. It's just brutal. And then it's like in third place, our team! And it's like, *Oh, this is what winning feels like.*

Buzzy Cohen: My team, we're pulling our weight well enough for a team of three. But let me remind you...there are some seriously smart people in this room.

Hans Von Walter: My name is Dr. Hans Friedrich Daniel Von Walter, uh, and I was the second runner up of the 2010 *Jeopardy!* College Championship, and 13 years later, I can still talk about nothing else.

Monya De: I'm Monya De. And I'm a health journalist. I was on in 2020. I did get to play with Alex Trebek, uh, which is a great memory, and I was on for one episode.

Brad Rutter: Uh, I'm Brad Rutter. That's B-R-A-D-R-U-T-T-E-R. Uh, occupation is, uh, professional Quiz Show Guy.

Buzzy Cohen: That's *the* Brad Rutter...also known as "The Buzz Saw."

Brad is high up there on the *Jeopardy!* leaderboard with big hitters like Ken Jennings, James Holzhauer, and Amy Schneider. But including all his tournament wins, Brad has actually earned more than anyone else in game show history...collectively, almost five million dollars.

Brad Rutter: My normy friends are always trying to recruit me to be a ringer on their, uh, regular pub trivia team 'cause they never win. And I'm like, *I don't, I don't know*. I might get recognized, you know, it's like, *Why does this guy need like a \$50 gift card to a bar?*

Yeah, Brad's a heavyweight champ. And at O'Brien's, he's playing on a team that seems to be garnering quite a reputation already.

Alison Betts: There's no suspense. We, we know they're gonna win, so it's, I know they're the unmentionables, the, the Voldemort table in the corner. No. It's...

Dan Avila: There's a lot of money at that table that they've won. The biggest winner is sitting over there.

Marshall Shelburne: Yeah, the, the team in the corner with Brad Rutter and Jerome Vered. Um, we, we don't have any illusions of beating that team tonight.

Buzzy Cohen: More...after the break.

ACT III

Buzzy Cohen: When I started to dig into the history of O'Brien's, I began to wonder...why *this* bar in Santa Monica? How did it become such a mainstay, a destination, for *Jeopardy!* contestants?

Over the years, the place has taken on enough lore that the facts have begun to blur.

One thing is for sure, though. Jerome Vered is one of the very first *Jeopardy!* contestants to show up at O'Brien's in the early aughts...and like Pam, he's a regular.

MUSIC: Beat with energy and suspense begins

Buzzy Cohen: Jerome was born and raised in Los Angeles and has worked in show business — as a writer and researcher for other game shows — for many years.

Jerome Vered: Let's go back to the dark ages, before Google. I was known that if somebody needed a fact quickly, I would get a call. I had a lot of friends who worked on *The Simpsons*, for example. And I would get a call like, you know, once every two months. *Is such and such a thing — is this true or is this the case? Or what is this?*

And I would tell them, *It's this, you can check it, but I think it's this or I know it's this.* And so I would have this reputation, like I would be someone to go to.

Buzzy Cohen: Jerome is a great friend. He's super sharp, and he's got stories for days. But he says that as a *Jeopardy!* contestant, he's...

Jerome Vered: **Completely underestimated by many people. I think part of it had to do with age, part of it had to do that I'm not that flashy. I don't think I'm as cute as some of the people, male or female, that had been on.**

Buzzy Cohen: While Jerome's not necessarily a household name, he definitely looms large in trivia circles. He's played with the best. He's a character, and if I'm being honest, he deserves his own spinoff podcast series.

His connection to *Jeopardy!* starts in the '90s, when he was a film student at USC working in the student production office.

On a slow afternoon, he was paging through a production guide when he came across the number for the *Jeopardy!* contestant department.

Jerome Vered: **So I see this number and I call the number. This woman picks up, she goes, *Jeopardy*. I said, *Hello. I was interested in becoming a contestant. How do I take the test?***

And she starts screaming at me, *How'd you get this number? How did you get this number?* I said, *How did I get this number? I'm at USC and it's this number in the production book. Don't ever call this number. Let me give you the number for you to call.* I said, *Okay.* And she gives me the number and she hangs up. I said, *All right. Little burnt.*

I, uh, take a minute. I pick up the phone, I dial the number. It rings...same voice, but much sweeter. *Hello, Jeopardy. Hello. I'm calling to see about being a contestant.* And then she told me what I needed to do, that they weren't testing right then. They were gonna test in a few months and I should call again, but it was the same voice.

Buzzy Cohen: Despite this faux pas with a former contestant coordinator for the show, Jerome did end up getting "The Call."

And made his way onto the *Jeopardy!* stage in 1992.

ARCHIVAL:

Johnny Gilbert: *This is Jeopardy. Now entering the studio are today's contestants — an analyst from Houston, Texas, Katie De Pitts. A writer from Studio City, California, Jerome Vered. And our returning champion, an advertising executive from New York City...*

Buzzy Cohen: Remember, this was when there was still a five-game limit. Jerome was a strong player, and in his fourth game, he set a new record. At the time, it was for the highest cash winnings in one game: \$34,000.

ARCHIVAL:

Alex Trebek: *Takes us to Jerome Vered, our champion. He had won 47,000 going into this game. Will he add to that? He will indeed. Are you gonna take us for a bundle?*

Jerome Vered: *I hope so.*

Alex Trebek: *You hope so? \$9,100...that gives you \$34,000 for today. A one-day record on Jeopardy and a four day total of \$81,401. [Applause.] Congratulations to you, Jerome.*

Buzzy Cohen: After his first appearance, Jerome came back for the Tournament of Champions in 1992. Thirteen years after that, he competed in the Ultimate Tournament of Champions.

MUSIC: Whimsical spacey music begins

Buzzy Cohen: And not long after that, he started going to O'Brien's often.

Jerome Vered: *Every two weeks, every week, every third week. And then Brad Rutter moved to town, so let's play. And it started getting more and more. And then...just became a thing to do Wednesday nights.*

Buzzy Cohen: Some nights are admittedly more spirited than others.

Jerome Vered: *If someone has really horrendous political opinions, you could kick them off your social group. But in the community it's like, crazy Aunt Gladys, you know? Well, I don't like those people, you know? And the government was right to do such and such a thing.*

Well, she's still Aunt Gladys. And if somebody in O'Brien's is, like, really crazy politically, well, you don't talk politics with them. But if they're not mean, you'll play with them still. 'Cause that's what a community is.

Buzzy Cohen: Here's Brad Rutter again.

Brad Rutter: It's a bunch of very smart people, which everybody knows, but it's also just a really warm and inviting and welcoming community. And, uh, I'm proud to say that I come here.

Buzzy Cohen: The night is winding down.

Patrick Friel: I attended a dinner party for eight, myself included. I asked each of the other seven attendees prior to this evening, how many of us did you already know? They gave me seven different answers. So one person said one, one person said two, et cetera, all the way up to one person who said seven. So here's the question prior to the party...how many of them did I know?

Dan Donahue: Buzzy has a phrase when you play with him, which is that he likes to encourage the team by going, *this is what winning feels like*. And right now, this is what fifth place feels like.

Buzzy Cohen: Patrick's very last round is really testing my own knowledge as a music executive.

Marty Butterick: So basically what happened is they had Chat GPT, uh, interpret the picture and then take that interpretation, put it into another A.I. And generate a new picture.

Buzzy Cohen: If that sounds confusing, it kind of is.

Imagine putting a phrase into Google translate into Chinese, and then translating that Chinese phrase into Spanish, and then trying to figure out what the Spanish phrase is saying back in English.

There will certainly be artifacts of what you originally said, but it's not gonna come out quite right.

This time, we're talking about album covers.

Picture a baby paddling underwater in a swimming pool. He's following a dollar bill being pulled on a string. It's the iconic cover of Nirvana's Nevermind, but...it looks really *off*. Like somebody was recreating it from a description rather than the thing itself, and the image doesn't quite come together.

This is exactly what happened when our quizmaster asked A.I. to interpret each album cover. Our task is to guess which real album is behind each AI-generated one.

But we're out of time, and now, they're announcing the answers.

Patrick Friel: Good job, Chat GPT. And Justice for All by Metallica, a black and white photograph of a baby swimming underwater with a green dollar bill and a fish hook just above him. Nevermind by Nirvana.

Uh, number 13 is the hardest one. Partially because only one component of the album got translated. [Crown groans.] A photograph of a stylized black and white image of a highway with a car driving on it set against a blue gradient background...

Buzzy Cohen: A few minutes later, after some tabulating, Pam starts announcing the final scores.

Pam Mueller: Tied for 22nd...tied for 21st, sorry, with 22 points apiece, Team First Date and Two People Drinking. In 20th place with 24 points, Leroy Jenkins. In 17th place, with 27, Seis Maestros. 16th place with 29 points, The Ivy League. Oh sorry, actually tied for 15th place — the HR Violation. In 14th place with 33...

Buzzy Cohen: Despite a lot of predictions, Brad Rutter and Jerome Vered's team didn't take the night!

The winning table is over by the front door...and it's packed with *Jeopardy!* champs.

There's Alan Lin, my old competitor from the Tournament of Champions in 2017.

There's Alan's boyfriend, Cliff Galiher — winner of the 2007 College Championship and second runner-up in that year's Tournament of Champions.

And Mehrun Etebari. A multi-day winner.

Plus, the only kid in the place.

Ivy Mason: I'm Ivy.

Mia Warren: You have a connection to *Jeopardy!*?

Buzzy Cohen: That's Ivy Mason, daughter of Maribeth and Richard Mason. My producer's asking her what her connection to *Jeopardy!* is, and Ivy looks puzzled.

Richard Mason: Um, well, both your parents were on *Jeopardy!*.

Ivy Mason: Wait, you guys were on *Jeopardy!*?

Richard Mason: You didn't know that? We never told you that?

Ivy Mason: No. No. You, you never told me that. You, you never told me that!

Buzzy Cohen: The Masons are playing on Alan Lin's team as well, which didn't have the same caché as Brad Rutter's team...but they did it.

Alan's Teammate: What would you like to say?

Alan's Teammate: It all came down to fundamentals, you know, dribbling, passing. You know. Strong elbow work in the low post. We got it done. We got it done, yeah.

Buzzy Cohen: It was a team effort. Cliff and Alan were in the lead the whole time and won.

Dan Donahue: Wire to wire.

Buzzy Cohen: Their secret weapon?

Cliff Galihier: Apparently Alan reads books, which is fantastic, and he knows what those books are called. It's a lot. Brilliant.

Alan Lin: I love reading. Books are great. Read more books. Or listen to books! Or listen...

THEME MUSIC

Buzzy Cohen: Next time on This Is Jeopardy! The Story of America's Favorite Quiz Show...

Corin Purifoy: My thoughts went from extreme excitement to excitement tinged with fear.

This is Jeopardy! The Story of America's Favorite Quiz Show is a production of Sony Music Entertainment and Sony Pictures TV.

It's hosted by me, Buzzy Cohen.

This episode was produced by Mia Warren.

Field production by Mia Warren and Sunny Balkin.

The series producers are Julia Doyle, Rob Dozier, Sylvie Lubow, and Mia Warren.

Associate producers are Serena Chow and Sunny Balkin.

Our series editor is Sarah Kramer. Executive producers are Lizzie Jacobs, Tom Koenig, Sarah Kramer, Michael Davies, and Suzanne Preté.

Production management help from Susonya Davenport and Tameeka Ballance-Kolasny.

Our theme music was composed by Hannis Brown. Our engineer is Cedric Wilson.

Special thanks to Charlie Yedor and Steve Ackerman.

And a big, big thank you to the Jeopardy staff and crew for all their time and help on this. Shout out to Alexa Macchia.

If you loved the show, follow us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, Stitcher, or wherever you get your podcasts.

CITATION

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