



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

Episode Sixteen: You Got "The Call"...Now What?!

A Production of Sony Music Entertainment, and Sony Pictures TV

Buzzy Cohen: Speaking from experience, there's nothing quite like getting *the call* — the one every *Jeopardy!* hopeful dreams of:

Bill Schantz: I was ecstatic at that point. I was, you know, jumping up and down and, uh, letting all my roommates know.

Buzzy Cohen: The moment you hear those words... "You're going to be on *Jeopardy!*...." is a moment like no other.

The shock, the disbelief, the excitement...what can I say, it's an amazing feeling.

But soon, after hanging up the phone, that initial wave of euphoria is often replaced by *another* feeling.

Srimal Choi: I was really filled with dread because I kept thinking, *what did I get myself into?*

Buzzy Cohen: For those of us in the *Jeopardy!*-verse, the thought of appearing on our favorite quiz show is equal parts delightful and daunting.

You might skew more one way than the other, but in either case, you'll often hear a common refrain from past contestants: *be prepared.*

But what that preparation looks like, however, might not be so obvious.

Lori Goodman: I did make some flashcards, but I really just had to focus on how I, as a human being, could show up on set and bring my best self.

THEME MUSIC

Buzzy: 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, we check in with some *Jeopardy!* contestants and take a peek behind the curtain: what does it take to prep for *Jeopardy!*?

THEME OUT

ACT I

MUSIC: Whimsical spacey music

Buzzy Cohen: If you've listened to our previous episodes, you've already heard some stories about the lengths *Jeopardy!* contestants will go to to prepare for the battlefield that is Stage 10.

Ken Jennings: My two year old son had a Fisher Price ring stacking toy with the colored plastic donuts, if you can picture that.

Buzzy Cohen: This is the GOAT himself, Ken Jennings, talking about *his* attempts to practice the buzzer before experiencing the real thing back in 2004.

Ken Jennings: And I took off the ring pieces. And I just kind of held onto the center core of it and thought, I bet this is about the same diameter as a Jeopardy! buzzer. So I would watch the show in real time, pretending to buzz in on my little plastic Fisher Price toy, yelling an answer at the TV.

Buzzy Cohen: Like Ken, a lot of *Jeopardy!* alums have prepped for the show by rigging up their own mock-buzzing devices, but one contestant we spoke with took things a step further.

Bill Schantz: My name is Bill Schantz. I am currently working as a computer programmer and I made the Jeopardy! simulator.

Buzzy Cohen: The name alone sounds like something out of a science fiction movie, but the idea for Bill's creation was very much grounded in reality.

Bill grew up the youngest of 10 kids in a small town in North Dakota. And like many people on this podcast (including myself), he was raised on a steady diet of *Jeopardy!*.

Bill Schantz: I just enjoyed game shows more than any other entertainment form especially on television. And, you know, once *Jeopardy!* came around, that was it. I was... loved the show and, uh, I remember staying home on more than one occasion from school to watch *Jeopardy!*.

Buzzy Cohen: Bill always thought he'd be on the show one day, and even signed up for some college classes because of it.

Bill Schantz: I remember taking specific courses just for the trivia knowledge for the most part, you know, history type classes and, uh art classes but, uh, *Jeopardy!* was actually in the back of my mind on some of those choices of courses to take in college.

Buzzy Cohen: Now *that* is next level commitment. But Bill... was on a mission.

MUSIC: Exciting and suspenseful beat

Buzzy Cohen: After graduating from the University of North Dakota with a degree in computer science, Bill moved to Denver, Colorado and landed his first job. During his free time, however...

Bill Schantz: I would go ahead and record *Jeopardy!* I'd keep track of any questions I didn't get right and I would later go to the library to look things up and also to read current events. And, uh, that's how I studied to be on the show.

Buzzy Cohen: Keep in mind... this was all pre-Google. But Bill's studying was also *pre-getting-the-call, pre-auditions, it was even pre-taking the Jeopardy! test.* He was diving in head first without knowing if he'd even make the cut.

Bill Schantz: Back then, the way to get on the show was to contact them, find out their testing days and basically plan a trip around it.

Buzzy Cohen: So in 1994, with *Jeopardy!* test dates in hand, Bill and his friend set out for Los Angeles.

Bill Schantz: There was a hundred people that took the test that day. I don't think I was very confident, but, uh, confident enough to, you know, give it a try.

Buzzy Cohen: Out of the approximately 100 people that took the test that day, only 7 passed. Bill was one of them. He went on to the auditions and a few months later...

Bill Schantz: I got the call to be on *Jeopardy!* I was very excited. Then it kind of hit me, uh-oh. I got three weeks left to get ready for the show.

Buzzy Cohen: With the clock ticking—and again, we’re talking dial-up internet days here—Bill spent most of his time hitting the books.

Bill Schantz: I ended up taking a few days off and, uh, looked up things I didn't know and brushed up on stuff I hopefully knew and made sure I still knew it.

Buzzy Cohen: Pretty soon, it was game day.

ARCHIVAL:

Johnny Gilbert: This is Jeopardy! Now entering the studio are today's contestants, an actor from Los Angeles, California, Brenda Beck. A software support manager originally from Glen Allen, North Dakota, Bill Shantz. And our returning champion, a librarian from Berkeley, California, Darlis Wood, whose one day cash winnings total \$7,700.

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

Bill Schantz: It's nervous energy. You're excited. And, uh, I know that, uh, I was sweating a lot. It's under the lights and everything like that. But you know, after the, uh, dollar bounce popped in and the game got started, I was totally focused on the game.

ARCHIVAL

Alex Trebek: Darlis, start us off.

Contestant: Occupations for one.

Alex Trebek: It's the American equivalent of a British barrister.

Contestant: What is the lawyer?

Alex Trebek: Yes.

Contestant: Occupations for 200.

Alex Trebek: It's the person who designs or arranges the dances for a theatrical production or ballet. Bill.

Bill Schantz: What is a choreographer?

Alex Trebek: Right.

Buzzy Cohen: It was a *tight* game with Bill and the returning champ, Darlis Wood, pretty much on equal footing throughout.

Then came Final Jeopardy! The category: Bodies of Water. The clue:

ARCHIVAL:

Alex Trebek: *The meridian of Cape Abula, Portuguese for needles, is the boundary between these two oceans. Good luck.*

Jeopardy Music

Buzzy Cohen: The correct answer was the Atlantic and Indian oceans. Turns out all three contestants got Final Jeopardy! wrong, but Bill's modest wager earned him the title of champion, and... another shot at victory.

In Bill's second game...

Bill Schantz: *I had the lead going into the final, and again, none of us got it right. And I bet enough to cover the second place if he bet it all and ended up losing the game.*

Buzzy Cohen: Sometimes that's the way the *Jeopardy!* cookie crumbles.

MUSIC: Slow building curious beat

Buzzy Cohen: Bill went back to North Dakota and had a watch party for his games, but afterwards, he decided to take a little bit of a break from the show.

Bill Schantz: *I remember not watching Jeopardy! for quite a while. I didn't record 'em anymore, and I just, you know, thought, oh my, you know, oh boy, you know, I don't have any more chances to be on the show.*

Buzzy Cohen: That hiatus lasted about a year. But for someone like Bill, *Jeopardy!* wasn't some fleeting thing he could write off and forget about. It had always been a constant in his life, something he could orbit around.

Especially when....

Bill Schantz: *Pub trivia became a big thing...*

Buzzy Cohen: I mean, you already know how I feel about pub trivia. I can't stay away from O'Briens...it's a nerdy escape with french fries. What's not to like!

But back to Bill....

Bill Schantz: So I had a team — you know, a bunch of friends that would play trivia together and one of them said, *we should try to be on Jeopardy!* I thought, well, *I've been on the show, I can't really be on, but, uh, I'll be the coach, basically.*

Buzzy Cohen: Uhh...Bill is definitely underselling it. He was officially the coach.

Bill Schantz: So early on what we would do is I had these little buttons or buzzers, and I'd tape an episode of *Jeopardy!*. They would have their hands on these buzzers, and whenever the clue was done by Alex, they could buzz in.

And then I'd pause the tape and they would give their answer and they'd play it out. Then we'd see what the answer was and do that 60 times an hour or a half hour per game. But uh, that got to be cumbersome.

Buzzy Cohen: Uhh, yeah! That sounds pretty intense. But what came next was even more of an undertaking.

Bill Schantz: Then I got the idea to start programming a game board that would display the answers.

Buzzy Cohen: Enter phase one of the *Jeopardy!* Simulator, a device designed to get players as close to the real game as possible.

Bill Schantz: My next thought was *okay, let's make a buzzer.* And uh, that improved things a lot, especially for the look and feel of the game.

Buzzy Cohen: Bill even found a way to mimic *Jeopardy!*'s lockout system - so that if players buzzed in too early, they experienced a slight delay before they could buzz in again. Just. like. the show.

After lots of trial and error, trips to Radio Shack, and finding the most realistic buzzer-buttons east of Culver City, it was time for phase two. J-Simulator guinea pigs.

Russ Schumacher: I feel like I've watched *Jeopardy!* basically my whole life.

Buzzy Cohen: This is Russ Schumacher, a professor of atmospheric science at Colorado State University, and, you guessed it... another *Jeopardy!* alum.

Russ Schumacher: I was first on *Jeopardy!* in 2003 and then won the 2004 Tournament of Champions and then appeared in the 2005 Ultimate Tournament of Champions and then made the semi-finals of the Battle of the Decades Tournament.

Buzzy Cohen: Some pretty impressive W's there. W's that might be due, at least in part, to the tutelage from a certain coach and his trusty sidekick.

Actually, let me backup a little. See, like Bill, and many J-contestants, Russ grew up a trivia *mega* fan.

MUSIC: Whimsical spacey music

Russ Schumacher: I've always been one of these people who just likes to, you know, acquire knowledge and has been curious about things in all different areas. Uh, so trivia, quizzing is one place where that really resonated with me because you get questions about everything, right?

From music to history, to geography, it rewards that knowledge and that, you know, is something that often is not the case in society.

Buzzy Cohen: In 2003, while Russ was in graduate school in Colorado, he decided to toss *his* hat into the trivia ring by taking the *Jeopardy!* test.

Russ Schumacher: It was handwritten at that time. You know, they passed out pieces of paper to take the test and then they broadcast the clues up on a big screen at the front of the room. We got the little *Jeopardy!* pens and things like that. We waited some amount of time for them to grade the tests and then they came out and read off the names of the people who had passed. And I was one of those people.

Buzzy Cohen: After making it through the auditions, but still waiting for the call, Russ found himself at a crossroads.

He could hunker down with flash cards *or* he could see what else was out there in the way of *Jeopardy!* tips, tricks, and insights.

Russ Schumacher: I discovered the *Jeopardy!* message board online that existed at that time just to gather as much information as I could about what it's like to be on the show. You know, I'm sure I said, *Hey, I'm new here. I'm from Fort Collins, Colorado. Uh, you know, I auditioned for the show.*

And then, Bill Schantz, who is from nearby here in Colorado, you know, is one of the people who reached out and said, *Hey, well if you do end up getting the call to go on the show, I've got this simulator, uh, we can do some training.* And once I actually got the call to be on the show, then I got in touch with Bill and said, *uh, yeah, I'm gonna take you up on that offer.*

Buzzy Cohen: They made a plan to meet at Bill's friend's apartment, and a couple of Russ' grad school friends tagged along for the road trip.

Russ Schumacher: We probably got there at 9 or 10 in the morning, and I'm guessing we played *Jeopardy!* games till 10:00 PM that night. We just played game after game and ordered pizzas. And Bill was the host because he knew how to operate the system, but then the rest of us just kind of traded off who was playing.

We'd call out the categories just like the real show and hit the daily double, think about how you have to wager, so it's exactly like the real gameplay. And it was super fun. Like even if it was not in the context of one of us trying to be on *Jeopardy!* for real, like that would be totally a fun way to spend an afternoon in my mind, is to just sit and like play pretend *Jeopardy!* games all day.

Buzzy Cohen: But for Russ, all those pretend games *actually* amounted to something *more...*

Russ Schumacher: I got really good at the buzzer and I attribute a lot of that to the practice on the simulator. But, beyond just the buzzer training, um, the feeling comfortable with the flow of the game...

Buzzy Cohen: Calling out the next category, wagering, not getting clammed up on daily doubles... the J-Simulator had helped Russ with all of that.

And when he clinched his first round in victories in 2003, in many ways, they were victories for Bill as well.

Bill Schantz: He ended up winning four games in a row. So, I was very excited at how well he did.

MUSIC: Energetic beat with momentum

Buzzy Cohen: In recent years, the J-simulator has gained a niche following among *Jeopardy!* alum. In fact, one weekend while I was preparing for my All Stars Team Tournament in 2019, my team met up with Bill and ended up logging over 50 practice games on the J-Simulator.

It's pretty nifty, but of course, not the only path to prep. A lot can also be said for mind over matter.

That's after the break. Stay with us....

ACT II

MUX: Exciting beat

Buzzy Cohen: Ok, I know *Jeopardy!* players can be a little bit extra... the way we organize elaborate watch parties, analyze gameplay and strategy, and even obsess over shaving down our buzzer reaction time.

But I have to admit, I'm kinda guilty of most of the things on that list, including, believe it or not, hitting the gym in the weeks leading up to my own *Jeopardy!* streak.

Before my first game, I honestly just wanted to look and feel my best. And for me that was stuff like planks, farmer carries, some conditioning—basic stuff. But it was also my first time in a gym.

Unconventional? Maybe. But another contestant we spoke to had a similar – albeit slightly more zen approach – to *her* prep....

Lori Goodman: Take a deep breath. Breathe in. Breathe out.

Buzzy Cohen: This is Lori Goodman, a California-native with a penchant for mindfulness.

Although, when Lori got the call to be on *Jeopardy!*, her life was full of anything but peaceful moments.

Lori Goodman: I had recently started a new job as the executive director of a nonprofit, and I was drinking from the fire hose. I was working crazy hours.

Buzzy Cohen: One busy afternoon, in between meetings, Lori found herself back in her office, quickly going through voicemails...

Lori Goodman: I saw that I had a missed call from a 310 number, an LA number, and I listened to the message, and my heart starts pounding.

My bookkeeper was next door, and I walked across the hall and went, *I think I'm going to be on Jeopardy.*

MUSIC: Optimistic beat

Buzzy Cohen: Watching the show had become something of a sacred family ritual in the Goodman household. So much so that Lori's husband and son even tried out for *Jeopardy!*.

And even though Lori often surprised herself with the number of responses *she'd* get right during their weekly watch parties, she didn't think of herself as a candidate for stage 10.

Lori Goodman: I knew I could shout out answers in front of the television, but I really didn't think I was *Jeopardy!* material..

Buzzy Cohen: But after some encouragement from her family, Lori decided to take the test, and the rest, as they say, is history.

MUSIC: Whimsical, spacey beat

Lori: When my husband and son found out, they were super happy for me. They had more confidence in me than I had in myself, and that was a tremendous, positive piece of preparing to be on *Jeopardy!*.

Buzzy Cohen: The other piece was a bit trickier...

Lori Goodman: I was in a new job, so there was very little I could do to add information into my brain. All I could do at that time to prepare was focus on how I, as a human being, could show up on set and bring my best self.

Buzzy Cohen: Yes, Lori continued watching *Jeopardy!* during this time, and managed to squeeze in Bob Harris' excellent book, *Prisoner of Trebekistan*. But when it came down to it, Lori's prep was more about calming the mind, not so much inundating it.

Lori Goodman: I just practiced being calm and focused. Taking a deep breath , noticing my balance, noticing where the weight of my body was tuning into my heart rate...

Buzzy Cohen: Ok, maybe this sounds a little woo-woo to some of you cynics out there, but when it comes to *Jeopardy!*, or really *any* high stakes, uncertain, big life moment – the truth is, *mindset matters*.

It's something that Ken Jennings, as *host*, has observed on multiple tape days.

Ken Jennings: It's almost impossible to tell in their first game who's gonna be dominant. But when they get more calm with time, that's the most powerful advantage.

Buzzy Cohen: And so when Lori's big day finally came around, she had that advantage going for her right from the start.

Lori Goodman: Mindfulness is really about having metacognition of how you're reacting, where you are. That turned out to be perfect for *Jeopardy!* because I found that you needed to be able to— very quickly— move from that sense of wonder, awe and excitement into focus and presence.

Walking onto the set, it's like walking into a dream. It's an awe inspiring moment, and when I rang in and Alex called my name and I got a correct answer, it was a full body joyful experience.

ARCHIVAL

Alex Trebek: This type of kite, also known as a cellular kite, is seen here aloft. Lori,

Lori Goodman: What is a Box Kite?

Alex Trebek: You got it!

Lori Goodman: I got in on the buzzer a lot and I found that I was really in a flow where if I saw a clue and I knew it immediately, I had this sense of clue, know, buzz, respond. It was very smooth.

ARCHIVAL

Alex Trebek: Many invertebrates comprising this 1400 mile structure off Australia died in 2016. Lori,

Lori Goodman: What is the Great Barrier Reef?

Alex Trebek: Yes.

Alex Trebek: A new bacterium, Ideonella sakaiensis, could soon help degrade these polymers in landfills, Lori

Lori Goodman: What are plastics?

Alex Trebek: Good.

Buzzy Cohen: Lori had cruised through the Single Jeopardy! round but game day nerves coupled with adrenaline started to creep in.

MUSIC: Slow building, suspenseful beat

Lori Goodman: After my interview with Alex, I noticed that my heart rate was elevated, that I was sweating.

Buzzy Cohen: In that moment, Lori could've let her anxiety snowball. Instead, she reminded herself to...

Lori Goodman: Focus on my feet connecting with the floor, relax my shoulders, and breathe, and bring myself into the present.

Buzzy Cohen: The self-talk more than paid off. In the Double Jeopardy! round, Lori regained her momentum, snagged a daily double, and took the lead going into Final Jeopardy...

ARCHIVAL:

Alex Trebek: Scary category perhaps for final — Design. Players, here's your clue: Switching the syllables in the German word for building of a home gave this design and architecture school its name. 30 seconds. Good luck.

Lori Goodman: When the final clue came up, I knew it immediately.

ARCHIVAL:

Alex Trebek: Judging by the speed at which all three of you wrote down your responses, I think we're gonna get a lot of correct responses here. Becky, we come to you first. You are 3,200, and you're gonna add to that because BauHaus is right. Oh, you're not going to add. You remain there. Alright, let's come down to our champion, Rick. 17,800 going into final...came up with a correct response...risked 11,399. It could be a big payday at 29,000. It all depends on Lori Goodman. She had the lead. Will she retain the lead? She has 19,000. She will add 15,000. She is the new champ of 34,401. Alright, Lori. Way to go.

Lori Goodman: Oh my goodness. I couldn't believe it. I never in a million years expected that I would win a game of Jeopardy!.

Buzzy Cohen: And yet, she did!

In Lori's second game, she was neck and neck with another player for both the Single and Double Jeopardy rounds. But in the final, she ultimately ceded the title of champion to her competitor, Kyle Jones.

And while losing is always *kind* of a bummer, Lori continues to be grateful for her calm, cool, and collected stint on stage 10.

LORI: I continue to be introduced to new people as the person who was on Jeopardy!, and it's now part of my identity. And that's something I'm proud of, and I get to carry with me for the rest of my life.

Buzzy Cohen: After the break, a mother daughter duo tackles *Jeopardy!* training...

ACT III

Buzzy Cohen: When Srimal Choi first got *the call* — in her case, *text* — she was skeptical.

Srimal Choi: I got a text from John Barra from Jeopardy!. And I was like, is it really?

Buzzy Cohen: It *really* was – a common reassurance that contestant producers have had to repeat many times over the years.

Srimal Choi: He said, can we talk? So we scheduled a time to talk. And then he said, How do you feel? Are you available for traveling? Do you have any felonies? You know, like all those questions. And I said, no, no. He's like, okay, I have one last question for you. Would you like to come to LA and be on Jeopardy!?! And I was like, what? The initial feeling was like very excited and very, uh, thrilled.

MUSIC: Exciting beat with momentum

Buzzy Cohen: Srimal and her family had been watching *Jeopardy!* for years, but much like Lori Goodman, Srimal never put much stock into getting on the show herself.

Srimal Choi: When our kids were little, we used to watch Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy!, I think almost every night. And when my son was really, really little, he used to say, da-wee-double. So we always kid him about that.

But, um, I work in the aerospace field and there's an organization called Women in Aerospace and they had an email that went out that said, Women in aerospace try out for Jeopardy!. I was like, maybe I'll try it.

Buzzy: When Srimal's 'maybe' turned into 'definitely,' followed soon after by an official invitation to compete on Stage 10, she wasn't the only one who was jazzed about her upcoming debut.

Ariana Choi: I thought it was amazing that my mom could be on a show that I had watched for so long...

Buzzy Cohen: That's Srimal's daughter, 14-year old Ariana Choi.

Ariana Choi: It was kind of hard to keep in that news, but, um, I was very happy for her too.

Buzzy Cohen: But as excitement spread throughout the Choi family, Srimal remembers another feeling taking hold.

Srimal Choi: I was really filled with dread because I kept thinking, what did I get myself into? And then the few people I did tell, they were like, I was watching *Jeopardy!*. Do you know *Jeopardy!* has this many million viewers a night?

Buzzy Cohen: About 9 million....

Srimal Choi: And then they said, *oh, did you watch Jeopardy! yesterday? That person, wow. They really embarrassed themselves.* [laughs] so I was getting more and more and more anxious, right? Mm-hmm.

Buzzy Cohen: But that's exactly where Ariana and the rest of the family stepped in...

Ariana Choi: Well first I made a *Jeopardy!* template.

Buzzy Cohen: Gotta love those DIY gameboards...

Ariana Choi: I got the idea to do that because, um, I'd seen a YouTube video of it. So, um, I used Google Slides. I made the categories, things that I knew and I also, uh, searched up on the internet some things like questions and fun facts. And so I put those in.

And we played that and my mom did really well, uh, compared to the other members of my family. But, um, my dad found this new template that was like, a lot more advanced. And, um, I put harder different questions this time. I wouldn't say it was exactly like the real thing, but I feel like it was a good example of preparation.

Buzzy Cohen: In the weeks leading up to Srimal's tape day, *Jeopardy!* took over the Choi household...

We're talking spreadsheets pinned to the fridge, flashcards scattered across the kitchen table, and most nights, after Ariana finished her homework, she and mom would hit the books together.

Srimal Choi: I bought a little, four inch by three inch, uh, summary of all of Shakespeare's plays. And I studied that. And then what else did I do?

Ariana Choi: You listened to, um, a recording of all of the states?

Srimal Choi: Oh that's right. The capitals. Yeah. Oh my goodness. We did a lot of that.

But of course we watched *Jeopardy!* every day together, and then I tried to answer the questions first so that helped me just like get in the rhythm of kind of just watching and answering the questions out loud.

Buzzy Cohen: Finally, after all that cramming, it was time for Srimal to test her *Jeopardy!* chops for real...

ARCHIVAL

Johnny Gilbert: Introducing today's contestants: a community college history instructor from Grand Blanc Michigan Aaron Guas, a Chief Strategy Officer from Fall Search Virginia, Srimal Choi. And our returning champion, a rideshare driver from Philadelphia Pennsylvania, Ryan Long, whose 10 day cash winnings total \$183,301.

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

Alex Trebek: Thank you Johnny Gilbert and welcome everyone to Jeopardy!

Buzzy Cohen: For Srimal, the game went by in kind of a blur, which ends up being the case for *many* contestants. I mean, it's a lot to take in. But she *did* remember landing a Daily Double in the Double Jeopardy round.

Srimal Choi: There's this movie, uh, about a ship that turns upside down.

ARCHIVAL:

Alex Trebek: In a Paul Gallico "Adventure" novel, this liner is capsized by a tidal wave & the survivors climb up to the hull to find a way out.

Srimal Choi: And then I had no idea what it was until like, for three long seconds and then suddenly the answer just came outta my mouth.

ARCHIVAL

Srimal Choi: What is Poseidon?

Srimal Choi: So that that was cool.

Buzzy Cohen: But like many before her, Srimal hit the stumbling block we call the buzzer.

MUSIC: Suspenseful beat

Srimal Choi: During one of the breaks, one of the people came up to me and said, you're hitting the buzzer too fast. You need to like, give it a beat before you hit it.

But, you know, 20 minutes or whatever it is, it's so short. It's hard to get that timing down.

Buzzy Cohen: At the end of the game, Srimal was bested by the returning champ Ryan Long, who already had 11 wins under his belt and would go on to win 5 more.

And while losing to a super champ might cushion the blow for some, Srimal still felt the sting of defeat.

Srimal Choi: After the taping, I didn't tell my kids how I did, but I said to my husband, well, I'm kind of disappointed. I'm so sad, I wish I could be a Jeopardy! champion. And he was like, well, you're a champion of your life or whatever he said to make me feel better. So that was really, really nice.

Buzzy Cohen: But as Srimal's air date crept closer, she was riddled with anxiety.

Srimal Choi: I started getting more and more nervous, and I remember saying to my dad, what if I'm a total embarrassment and everyone will see?

And I remember someone telling me, you know, 10 million people will see if you failed. Um, so I feel like right before, it was like a slow spiral of doom.

Buzzy Cohen: Ah yes, the old spiral of doom. We've all been there.

Srimal Choi: But, uh, the whole time, like my parents and my family, they were, they were super, super supportive. It was only me that got into that kind of emotional spiral. And then when it aired, the reaction I got from everyone was so positive. First of all, I answered the first question... I totally didn't remember that.

I was like, yay. I answered one question. Right. And then it was just so nice to see how supportive people were and everyone was really like, *we're so proud of you. It's so amazing to have you on Jeopardy! and see you on Jeopardy!. Remember me from college and I watch you on Jeopardy!* and just like everyone was really, really nice.

Buzzy Cohen: The other takeaway from Srimal's *Jeopardy!* experience?

MUSIC: Optimistic beat

Srimal Choi: I feel like it brought us, brought us closer as a family to be able to have that kind of adventure together.

Ariana Choi: I learned that my mom was really, uh, much better at trivia than I thought she was. Um, cuz I thought she was good, but I didn't know she was this good. And, um, the fact that she was able to get the daily double and the first question and a lot of the questions was really great.

Um, yeah, and I also learned how supportive my family can be during these times and motivational.

Buzzy Cohen: At the end of the day, there's so much more to the *Jeopardy!* experience than those 30 minutes you spend on stage.

From high-tech buzzer training to mindfulness exercises to family-run trivia bootcamps, it's clear that the *Jeopardy!* whole is only as great as the sum of its parts. What really matters are the things you discover—and the connections you form—along the way.

Next week on This is Jeopardy....

Mattea Roach: There are so many things that are gonna happen in this next like 30 minutes that I fundamentally can't control and have nothing to do with me. I don't know what my categories are gonna be. I don't know really how fast my opponents are gonna be on the buzzer. And so what I'm thinking is like I need to focus exclusively on what I can control, which is basically just like, do I ring in or not?

Credits

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 Rob Dozier, Sylvie Lubow, and Serena Chow.

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

Associate producer is Serena Chow.

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. Sam Bair engineered this episode.

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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.

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CITATION

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