

Inside J! 1.20.25

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

Sarah: Hello and welcome back to Inside Jeopardy, your exclusive and official podcast destination for all things happening in the world of Jeopardy. I'm Sarah Foss in the podcast studio, and I'm joined remotely by the one and only man about town, bon vivant, Sam Buttrey.

Welcome, Sam.

Sam: Thank you. It's good to be here in the. Inside Jeopardy! Remote Studio coming to you from the oldest restaurant in the world, founded in 1725. It's Sabrino de Botin in Madrid, Spain. But that's from Madrid, Sarah. What's happening with you guys down in Southern California?

Sarah: Well, thanks for checking, Sam.

We are now almost two weeks into the wildfires. I'm happy to report that so many of them Are now more contained, and I'm sure you've seen it even as far up north in northern California as you are. Just it's really incredible to see the community coming together and the outpouring of love and [00:01:00] support.

And it just really reminds you that as much as people think Los Angeles is this big. big city. It really is made up of all of these communities. I think I shared last week. My kids school is in the Pacific Palisades and just to be a part of that community and seeing people who have lost so much and yet are being offered so much help and it doesn't bring back your house.

It doesn't bring back your things, but to know that people care and that people are really stepping up in whatever way they can. To try to build back the lives of so many that have been lost from a material standpoint. Obviously, everyone's so grateful to have each other and their safety, but it really has been inspirational. And, uh, Even on Celebrity Jeopardy last week, I don't know if you saw it, but, you know, Sony and ABC and Jeopardy, everyone just wants to find a way to help. Sony has donated 5 million to the cause, and you may have seen that we said, [00:02:00] This season of Celebrity Jeopardy was taped prior to the devastating wildfires currently impacting Southern California, in addition to the organizations mentioned in tonight's episode.

Jeopardy will be making donations to directly aid with relief efforts. Our thoughts are with everyone affected and all of the heroes working tirelessly on the front lines. I just want to give one more shout out to those heroes. I live just east of a fire line and what has been done to protect all of our homes is just, it's unbelievable.

24 hours a day, that care and the effort. And all that went into making sure that more was not lost, I will forever be grateful, and it's just been something really special to witness in a really awful time.

Sam: And it's beautiful to see firefighters from all over, not just the greater LA area. We've had firetrucks from Monterrey go down.

I know there have been crews from other countries, Mexico and so on, coming in to help. Uh, in these difficult times.

Sarah: Well, as always, Sam, we need Jeopardy in our lives, in good times and in bad, and we're bringing Jeopardy [00:03:00] to Seattle. You'll be there. Ken Jennings will be there. We're heading north. What do you think about the next Inside Jeopardy Live on Tour?

Sam: This is very exciting. This is what I signed up for, Sarah. I want to bring Jeopardy out of Culver City, a fine town, and bring it to all the other cities in the country, one by one. And, uh, Seattle's our next destination, and I, for one, am stoked.

Sarah: Well, I think we all are. Our big event is going to be on Wednesday evening.

That's going to be at the Neptune Theater at 7 p. m. We'll be hosting the podcast live. Michael Davies, myself, you'll be a guest. We'll have other special guests. Ken Jennings will be there. He's going to host that interactive game. So everything Everyone who's in attendance can actually play Jeopardy with Ken Jennings.

We're going to have really cool prizes. That's going to be fun, but we're also going to the college campus of the university of Washington. We're bringing the real buzzers. We're bringing prizes. We're bringing you, Sam. I mean, that's going to be fun. That's earlier on Wednesday. And then on Tuesday evening, we're going to have a Jeopardy!

Bar League event at a [00:04:00] cool venue up there, Moss Bay Hall. Jamila, we met them the other day. Sam, such a fun, fantastic host. I think they are going to bring it, not to steal your line, but you're going to be there, too, to be a sidekick. So there's just so much happening up in Seattle. Check the website if you want more information, but we are going to be there just, just in a couple of days, actually.

Sam: Very exciting. I'm looking forward to Jamila doing their thing and I'm looking forward to seeing people react to being able to play real, real like Jeopardy with Ken Jennings himself. That is exciting. I think a lot of people will be pretty stoked to do that as well.

Sarah: Yeah. Well, Champions Wildcard is.

Continuing to roll on. We've got the semifinals and the finals this week, which means next week starts the tournament of champions. And on Sunday, live on YouTube, you're going to get to see the third annual Jeopardy! Honors. Really fun awards given out. Of course, we're going to induct our next member of the Jeopardy!

Hall of Fame. So you won't want to miss that. And it's just going to, [00:05:00] it's going to get you in the spirit. It's like Christmas Eve, you know, before the TOC. So that's something to look forward to. You know, tonight, our good old buddy Colin Jost will be on Jimmy Fallon talking to all things pop culture jeopardy, because we're getting through those knockout rounds.

It's time to head into the quarterfinals and the semis and the final. And it's getting good.

Sam: There's a lot of jeopardy going on in this world, Sarah, between the celebrities, the pop culture, the regular jeopardy, Jeopardy on the road in Seattle, who knows? Total domination is but one step away, I think.

Sarah: It often is with Jeopardy.

It often is. All right, well, let's get back into the regular show and look at the highlights from Week 1 of Champions Wildcard. On Monday, we kicked it off with Will Yancey, Paul Klaassen, and Jen Feldman. Paul was on fire in the Jeopardy round, but unfortunately missed two true daily doubles, dropping him down to zero.

Will and Jen then battled for the lead, but it was Jen who managed to take the lead heading into final. We'll Unfortunately, was incorrect [00:06:00] in that round, and so Will, Will Yancy, pulls off the come from behind win!

Sam: Will, coming out of the Second Chance Tournament, now advancing to the next round of Champions Wild Card.

Anything can happen in Jeopardy!, Sarah. I don't know if you know that.

Sarah: I do. That's one thing I've learned over my years. A lot of support, though, for Paul on Reddit, you know, people saying everything from, Paul played lights out tonight, it's a shame those Daily Doubles didn't work out. Paul, you were an absolute buzzer beast.

And then Zoe Groveman from Second Chance said, Paul, if you see this, I feel for you so much. Of course, Zoe came up against some tough Daily Doubles also. I did enjoy the anatomical song titles for 1200. Anytime I can hear Ken Jennings say, I like big butts and I cannot lie, to quote Sir Mix a Lot, in this hip hop song, in praise of fuller bottoms.

And who gets it right? None other than Will Yancey. You know?

Sam: Just to hear Ken read that clue [00:07:00] made my day and it probably made Will's day as well. Fun for everyone.

Sarah: Yeah, it really was. One person on Reddit said, Nyeh! I thought I knew what happiness was, and then I saw Will pronounce Baby Got Back. So quite a game.

Sam: Well, moving on to Tuesday's quarterfinal with Davey Morrison, Stevie Ruiz, and Evan Dorey. Evan just dominated with 21 correct responses. He ended Double Jeopardy with 20, 600.

Sarah: Yeah, quite an impressive game by Evan. Let's hear how he was feeling after that big victory.

Ken: Evan, you did not even need to get it right.

You had that game locked up.

I mean, I didn't think about it as hard as I might have normally.

Ken: I see. Like, you probably would have got it right. I

was like, oh, that makes sense. I don't know. Probably plus or minus 15 years I'm in the ballpark.

Ken: Were you expecting, uh, to make it to the semifinals? How does this feel?

Uh, honestly, it's, uh, it's, uh, still a total blur. I won one game. I feel like I'm, you know, up here with people have won two and three, and I [00:08:00] still felt like maybe it was a bit of a mistake. Maybe you got the wrong name when you sent out the sent out the invites. But, you know, I prepared a lot U. S. History. I definitely studied a lot of them.

Canadian. I, you know, I didn't learn a lot of this. So, and I got a little lucky. You got the Manassas battle in Manassas. Manassas Bull Run, Galveston Hurricane, a couple of the things, you know, that I had

Ken: been studying for the show? Yeah,

that I had kind of gone through, like, some big historic events and it ended up that I got super lucky in that.

I got unlucky. I had a fashion designer's category the last time, too. You can see how often they've had to come clean me up. You can see how good I am at that. So, I feel like it balances. It goes, it goes in and out, so.

Sarah: Well, and Evan Dory, just one of two people who was a one game champion coming into Champions Wildcard, so really nice to see that, as we always say, anything can happen in a Game of Jeopardy.

Really, he is proving that he deserves the win. Well, heading into Wednesday, it was another great game. Drew Goins, Jay Fisher, Aiden [00:09:00] Orzek. Jay and Drew battled it out, but a strong finish to double jeopardy earned Drew both a big lead and over 23, 000 heading into final. But Jay was not too far behind, 15, 400.

On that final clue, though, Drew was correct, and he advances to the semifinals.

Sam: Another second chance competitor coming through. Well, there was a slow start to this game, and at one point, when it was Drew's turn to call, he said, New board? Because he wrote on Reddit, flummoxed. Yeah, somebody

said they looked flummoxed, and Drew said, Yeah, flummoxed is an understatement.

I might just as well have stepped out for coffee and a donut. There were actually 10 triple stumpers during that whole game, which is about par for the course, but 7 of them happened before the first commercial break. So off to a very slow start, but 2 good scores at the end for Drew and Jay.

Sarah: And as if you might not enjoy Drew enough on Jeopardy, I just read an article in the TV Insider that he wants to go on Survivor.

Can you just picture it?

Sam: I'm not sure that I [00:10:00] can. He seems too nice to be on Survivor.

Sarah: Oh, I don't know. I think he's just cunning enough. And, you know, he will be in good company because, of course, Drew Basile, who we'll see back in the Tournament of Champions, famously was on season 45 of Survivor and made it 23 of 26 days.

I think these Jeopardy! champions, they have what it takes to make it out on an island. All for one.

Sam: I think they can do that. Let's head into Thursday's game with Joey DeSena, Mehul Shah, and Eamon Campbell. This was a tight game between Joey and Mehul. Mehul went all in on the first Daily Double in Double Jeopardy!

to take a big lead, until Joey found the second Daily Double, wagering 11, 000 to put him in first place heading into finals. It was a triple stumper final. Both Mayhall and Joey wagered zero dollars and Joey from the lead secured the win.

Sarah: Joey actually commented that he was relieved that he hadn't seen Mayhall perform.

Mayhall's episodes would actually air after Joey competed in Champions Wildcard, so he didn't know [00:11:00] anything like, oh, Mayhall held the record for, you know. Highest daily double wager, and also highest pre final Jeopardy! total. So, he was happy he didn't know that, and relieved to get the win even more once he knew those stats.

Let's hear how he was feeling.

Ken: Mehul, you actually had more attempts on the buzzer than either of your competitors in that game. You tried 42 of those clues. They were both kind of in the low 30s. Um, but you were having a rougher time getting in on the buzzer than Joey in particular, right?

Yeah, I don't think I was timing it well, especially towards the end.

You

Ken: Were you noticing that

he

Ken: was, he was always just ahead of you.

Yeah. Yeah.

Ken: Yeah, you had by far the best buzzer percentage in that game. I'll take it, I suppose. Well, you also

won fair and square. Oh, yeah. Yeah. I mean, the zero bet seemed appropriate, especially with the wild cards at work. So, yeah, not surprising Mayhell had the same idea there.

So,

Ken: yeah, those looked like very sensible scores to coast in on and you, when you guys gave the little handshake, it seemed like you were thinking you might be, Seeing each other at some point, you know, I hope so, but [00:12:00] we

really don't know what would happen with the other games. So we've had fun being sequestered all morning together.

We watched Princess Bride,

Ken: lots of

quoting going on in that room.

Ken: I find that hard to believe a bunch of Jeopardy contestants would be quoting Princess Bride. Yep.

Sarah: Was A Princess Bride for you, Sam? What did you watch in your sequestering? I think it

Sam: might have been, it was optional. So, uh, I ended up not watching it because I was far too nervous.

But Joey is right about the sequestration. You, uh, you have no idea what's going on. You don't know which game you'll be playing in. So they come call a few names, and people leave, and you just wait. And then an hour or so later they come in and call more names. So you have to be ready at any moment to get called.

And you know nothing about what's going on. Uh, and of course, importantly, you do not know what the earlier games have had in terms of scores because, of course, the wild cards, uh, get to advance to the next round.

Sarah: Well, it worked out for you, Sam. It

Sam: did.

Sarah: If I remember correctly, you won your game. You didn't have to worry about those wild cards and you won the whole thing.

Sam: That is correct. I was lucky [00:13:00] enough to get past that without having to be a wild card, not have to sweat anything out, and then I went on to win, and, uh, that was just the first step on the road to total victory. Jeopardy! Domination! TJD, as we call it.

Sarah: Oh, I love this. You know, we needed another. We needed another.

We got J A T, J T T. We needed J T D. I love it. Well, our last quarterfinal matchup was on Friday, and we saw Adam Hirsch, Marko Cerec, and Will Weiss. All three players evenly matched heading into Double Jeopardy! In that round, Marko responded correctly to both Daily Doubles, maintaining his lead heading into final.

We'll It was another triple stumper, but Adam and Will both went all in. Marco had that zero dollar wager, and he takes away the win in this one.

Sam: Ah, so it's very difficult to know how to wager in those potential wild card spots, and you can't fault Adam and Will for going all in. I will say that I was at these games, the games of this week, and so too was five game champion

and, uh, soon [00:14:00] to be TOC competitor Allison Betts in the audience, and Ken spotted her and called her out and said, Oh, what are you doing?

scouting the competition. And in fact, it was Marco who had beaten Allison during her original run. So I bet she's out for a little bit of revenge in Tournament of Champions.

Sarah: Yeah. And at the end of that game, Ken was able to reveal who the four wild cards would be. So in addition to our five champions, we have May Hall Shaw, Jay Fisher, Jen Feldman, and Paul Klassen.

So those big daily doubles, he ends up in the semis and those will kick off the tournament. Today, first matchup today. If you're curious, we've got Joey, Drew and Jen. You won't want to miss it. It's a new year 2025. And you may be thinking, how am I going to make this year different? How can I 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 with thousands of customizable templates. Shopify makes it [00:15:00] simple to create your brand and get that first sale. Plus Shopify helps with details like shipping, taxes, and payments from one single dashboard, allowing you to focus on the important stuff.

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Well, we also had a big week of celebrity jeopardy last Wednesday. This was a pretty fun game. We had. Melissa Peterman, Neil deGrasse Tyson, and Jackie Tone. Close game between all three, but it was Neil who narrowly led heading into Double Jeopardy. Then Melissa led heading into Triple Jeopardy, but that was all thanks to a 2,000 Daily Double.

In that round, though, Neil missed two Daily Doubles. That allowed Melissa [00:16:00] to take an 800 lead heading into Final. But, All three players still very much in it, which we love to see, especially in Celebrity Jeopardy after three full rounds. Then it was Jackie, who was the only player to come up with the correct response.

She gets an exciting come from behind win. I don't think anyone was as surprised as Jackie herself.

Sam: No, she was in third, but not too far back. A well fought game by all three players. Um, I will say after the Final Jeopardy! category was revealed, it was the Muppets. All three players started dancing, which is not something you get to see on Jeopardy!

every day. And Ken said, I've never seen three people happier in Final Jeopardy! Good to have the Muppets on your side.

Sarah: Yeah. And then a little behind the scenes, Jackie said, Wait, my second outfit, you know, because our winners from that day come back, we play three quarter finals and then we play the semi final that evening.

So Jackie said, my second outfit doesn't even fit. It was just a joke to throw in a second outfit because I was [00:17:00] playing Neil deGrasse Tyson. Like these are the, these are the things you can't expect in Celebrity Jeopardy. I

Sam: often wonder if the celebrities want to get selfies with the other celebrities. I mean, if I met Neil deGrasse Tyson, I think I would politely ask if I could have a picture taken with

Sarah: They do.

There is a lot of selfie action happening. Mostly the biggest star for our celebrities is the stage. You know, they're so excited to be on the Alex Trebek stage, so those are, most of the selfies are of them with the stage, but certainly their competitors as well. We got some great praise from Claire McNair on X.

We love when Claire is supporting us, and she says, Friends, I watched tonight's. Celebrity Jeopardy episode taped live in the studio, and it is hands down one of the best and funniest things ever to grace the Alex Trebek stage. Get thee to a remote control. If you hear someone in the audience laughing so hard they have a coughing fit, well, we know who it was.

It was a good one. Always good

Sam: to have Claire [00:18:00] McNeer chime in, and it's always good to see the celebrity games being well played by people trying hard. Very exciting. Yeah.

Sarah: Yeah. So. So Jackie goes on to the semi finals, but both Neil and Melissa receive 30, 000 for their charity. And, uh, yeah, the quarterfinals will roll on this Wednesday.

But wait, Sam! It's time for your segment! What do you have for us?

Sam: For this week's But Wait, Let's More.

Sarah: Okay, first we gotta let you know what it's called. It's called But Wait, There's More. I feel like

Sam: I should know that by now. So, for this week's But Wait, There's More, I want to use something from Wednesday's game.

So if you could please bring it. Fiddling around, 1600. Answer, Daily Double.
And

you

Ken: needed that, Jay. Drew's trying to put a little daylight between you two. Um, let's go with 1800. Okay, you'll have 14, 600 if you're right in Fiddlin Around. You need [00:19:00] violins to represent this human part of a 1936 Prokofiev title duo. Um

Sam: Who is Peter? Peter. Peter and the Wolf. That is correct. Yes, indeed.

Peter and the Wolf is a well known orchestral piece intended for children. It tells the tale of Peter and his friends Bird, Cat, and Duck. I'm not sure who thought up those names. Actually, I am sure. It was Prokofiev. They're hanging out in a meadow when Peter's grandfather comes out and warns Peter about a wolf in the neighborhood.

Grandpa locks the gate, but Peter sees the wolf come in and swallow Peter. Duck. So he climbs over the wall, and with birds help, lassos the wolf. When hunters arrive with guns, Peter convinces them to take Wolf to a zoo. And at the end, we can hear Duck quacking on the inside of the wolf because apparently he was swallowed whole.

Sarah: Okay, good news for the duck. What happens to the

Sam: wolf? Well, it's not clear. I'm not sure I want to know. And I have to say, it never ends well for the fairy tale wolf. Anyway, in the, in the piece, [00:20:00] there's a narrator and then each of the characters is represented by a different instrument. So as Ken says, Peter is represented by the violins.

This is one of the most recorded classical pieces of all time with at least 400 recordings and a dozen languages and narrators ranging from Boris Karloff to David Bowie to Weird Al and even a Grammy winning version featuring Mikhail Gorbachev, Bill Clinton, and perhaps inevitably Sophia Loren.

Sarah: Okay, so Bill Clinton has a Grammy.

Sam: Bill Clinton actually won two Grammys, which puts him a little behind Beyoncé, but a little ahead of Mikhail Gorbachev. So another fun part of this response is the political backstory. In the Soviet Union in 1936, you wanted to stay on the good side of the authorities. And so maybe this tale shows Peter as a young forward thinker who challenges the old fashioned beliefs of the grandfather and bravely takes risks in the face of danger.

This worked for Prokofiev, who did not get in trouble, but it didn't work so well for a popular narrator of the tale, [00:21:00] Natalia Sats. For unrelated reasons, she got in trouble with the Soviets and ended up in prison or camps for five years. But eventually, she was entirely rehabilitated. Exactly like the duck.

Sarah: Exactly like the duck, Sam. I think that's your new band.

Sam: Great name for a band. We'll be forming shortly.

Sarah: All right. Well, thanks for that. And now it's time for this week's host chat. An audience member asked Ken, what do you find most exciting or challenging about post season?

Ken: I think that the thing that you can really tell more than anything about gameplay is just that the players have been here before, so they're a little comfortable.

Like, you can't really overstate, like, how daunting it is to step onto Jeopardy for the, like, you're like, what is even happening here? I can't believe I'm here. And during the tournaments, everybody's done it before. You know, in this tournament, pretty much everybody has both won and lost. They've seen every, they've had every possible Jeopardy emotion already.

And so people are like looser. They can kind of, you know, let it all hang out, have [00:22:00] a little fun. Um, and I think it really shows in, uh, in the gameplay, people tend to play better. And it looks like they're having fun.

Sarah: They're having fun. Just like us, Sam. Just like

Ken: us.

Sarah: Well, believe it or not, that is the end of this week's podcast.

We have to get ready to head off to Seattle. Any of our Seattle listeners, we hope we will see you up there at one of our events. And for all of our listeners. Other listeners on the pod, we'll see you back here next week because we'll be highlighting the semi finals and finals of Champions Wildcard.

We're getting ready to head into TOC. Such an exciting week ahead. See you back here next week.

Ken: We're so glad you're here. Stick around and click that subscribe button so you see all our latest [00:23:00] videos.