

2.24.25 Inside J!

[00:00:00] From the Alex Trebek Stage at Sony Picture Studios,

Michael: this is Inside Jeopardy! Ah, Johnny Gilbert on the axe, never gets old. Hello, welcome back to Inside Jeopardy, your exclusive and official podcast destination for all things happening in the world of Jeopardy. I'm Michael Davies, I'm here in the studio with producer Sarah Foss.

Sarah: Hello, Michael. Welcome. Glad to have you back.

Michael: Thank you. Nice to be back. Last time we

Sarah: prodded, you know, we were right there on the Alextra backstage. Yes. Moments after the conclusion of an exciting JIT, which is now airing and, you know, Jeopardy is once again in the world. I don't know if you have had finally a chance to watch, at least in its entirety, the SNL 50th yet.

Michael: Uh, to quote one of my favorite movies of all time and a, uh, a part of the SNL 50th, Martin Short in the movie, I think it's called The Big Picture, is Uh, where he says at one point in that movie, uh, playing a movie agent, I've read almost all of the scripts, almost all of the way through. Yeah. I've watched almost [00:01:00] all of the SNL 50th.

Uh, what an amazing job they did on that whole program, by the way. Uh, yes, uh, Black Jeopardy. Uh, Kenan, uh, who I was lucky enough to spend some time with last summer when he came on, uh, Millionaire with Kel, um, I know he's a big quiz show fan and, uh, always fun to see when SNL takes on Jeopardy, however they take it on.

Sarah: Yeah, I love it. I thought maybe we would get one of the, you know, celebrity Jeopardy sketches that Will Ferrell was so famous for, but I did see on the Today Show, they did a poll of best sketch ever in the history of SNL.

Michael: Yep.

Sarah: And Celebrity Jeopardy with Will Ferrell did win. So, you know, we're winning just like the WGA award.

Michael: Oh, yeah, we did. We won a WGA award. Uh, got to congratulate the writing team, um, and the producing team and the research team and everyone

involved in Pop Culture Jeopardy. A great win, um, again, in a very tough category against, uh, Original Recipe Jeopardy, uh, only two shows in the category, but won a WGA award for the first.

Time [00:02:00] in over a decade, which is which is pretty incredible.

Sarah: Well, I don't know if you saw on our socials this past week But sports ball Michael, this is really one of your masterful ideas, you know in the world of jeopardy as a sport It was so cool.

Michael: Yeah, I mean I started following what Riley Uh, does with sports ball.

If you haven't seen it, just go to his instagram account. Um, at sports ball, he does these amazing sort of infographics about stats or things happening in the world of sports. And he sort of, um, explains things that are quite complicated, but he makes them much more simple. And I started a conversation with him and with producer Carlos.

And we started trying to figure out if we could it. sort of bring some clarity to what is, there is often a lot of confusion about the regular Jeopardy season and the postseason and whether we play too many tournaments and we, uh, put that up there. It's on the Jeopardy socials. It's on the sports ball social as well.

Take a look at it. It's just a really inventive, creative way of [00:03:00] explaining. Uh, what we're working on it.

Sarah: Yeah. And very well received from all the comments that I saw. People also love to comment about Drew Goins and he recently did an interview with the Washington Post where he works with the humor columnist and we learned a few things about him.

Did you know his original name was Goins? Like, rhymes with groin, kind of feeling, or coin. And his brother played football in middle school and wanted them to say, like, Goins, Goins, gone! And so the family changed the pronunciation of their name. And now we have Drew Goins. So in all the interviews, we didn't learn this about Drew, but I love it.

Michael: As someone who also has a changed pronunciation of my last name because Davies in Britain is Davis, but I gave up after a while in America and just accepted it's gotta be Davies. I can't correct anybody anymore. Like I really appreciate that story.

Sarah: Yeah, you are such a Davies.

Michael: Yeah, there you go.

Sarah: Well, in the world of JPT, Jeopardy production time, PCJ.

We've made it this [00:04:00] Wednesday, the semi finals, Michael, believe it or not, the knockout rounds are gone. The quarterfinals are gone. And now we're down to an elite nine teams in the semis.

Michael: Excellent, excellent television. I've found myself returning to prime video to watch so many of these episodes. And fortunately, this is a factor of my advancing age, Sarah, I've forgotten most of them that we sat there in the studio and like entire moments.

Um, uh, Colin makes me laugh so much. The categories brings put such a smile on my face. The clues also wonderful teams, wonderful gameplay. If you haven't watched a lot of pop culture jeopardy yet, tune in now. The, uh, we're at the sharp end of the competition.

Sarah: Yeah. You're going to see the best of the best.

And in JPT, we are, you know, shooting today, regular Jeopardy, but if you're watching in JAT, it's the JIT. We had an exciting five quarterfinal games last week. Let's get right in. To talking about those games. On Monday we kicked off the JIT quarterfinals with Matt Amodio, Hannah Wilson and Doug [00:05:00] Molitor.

Matt and Hannah both got out to a hot start, Hannah taking a small lead heading into double jeopardy thanks to a 4, 000 daily double. They battled throughout DJ, but Matt went all in. 13, 600 on the last Daily Double. That obviously gave him a commanding lead heading into Final. Hannah, though, still in contention with a 22, 400 score heading in.

Both Matt and Hannah were correct, and so therefore, because he had the lead going into Final, Matt Amodio, fresh off Masters, comes back to the JIT and proves he has what it takes to head to the Semifinals.

Michael: I mean, look, the first game in JIT really set the stage for the rest of the competition. I just love elite level jeopardy.

I love watching these. amazing champions compete against each other. I love everything about the way plays. I love the difficulty of the material. I love the speed on the buzzer. I love the anxious look on their faces as they get buzzed out where normally they would have got in on a regular show. Like [00:06:00] everything was so good and three wonderful players to kick it off.

Sarah: Yeah. Well, if we didn't mention it, we did have the category with Anthony Mackie in this show, uh, of course, promoting. Captain America Brave New World, but we had him doing a category about presidents in the past who have been, you know, in trouble because obviously in the new movie, he, uh, Harrison Ford is in a little bit of trouble.

And Anthony's there to save him. But a funny story about this category, Michael, we shot it, um, back in our little production office, he was on zoom. And at the time I had all of the holiday gifts that Ken was going to give to the staff. So I'm like huddled in this corner, kind of by a, a metal J and we got on so many goes.

Are you in the bathroom? I said, Oh, no, no, I'm just kind of in the corner. And he goes, Okay, bathroom lady. And for the rest of the shoot, he referred to me as bathroom lady in a very, very nice and respectable way. But that's what I'm going to always think of when I think of Anthony Mackie.

Michael: That's wonderful.

I have another new nickname for you, which is excellent. Um, one of my favorite parts of this episode, Matt Amodio revealing that his new persona. [00:07:00] On Jeopardy is going to be game show villain.

Sarah: Yeah. He just wants to take that title. I guess from James is the reigning villain. Not very convincing so far though.

Not so much. Well, Ken did catch up with Matt after his win to find out about the victory of the Daily Double Wager and this new villainous persona.

Ken: Matt. Walk us back to that Daily Double Wager. You didn't seem to hesitate for a moment. Nope, I thought that was the right thing to do. Tell me why. I know most of them, but not all of them.

Uh, and so I felt like that was the best bet. Did you like the category? It was a little bit high up in a philosophy category. Yeah, I think, uh, there were a couple of triple stumpers before that in the category, which is never good, but it's nice

moving up. On the board. That's right. You figured out personal identity in the fourth slot.

It must be easier than that. That's right. By the transitive property. If only it were monotonic. Not usually how it works, but it did pay off. Today was the day when you needed to have that lead going into final. Hannah, what a great game. [00:08:00] You had to make that big daily double wager as well in the first round.

Looking for that final Daily Double? Didn't find it, but, uh, I don't know. This is so much fun. Like, just playing Jeopardy, playing against, like, it was just great. You two were very evenly matched. 37 attempts on the buzzer for you, 39 for Matt. So, the Daily Double wager kind of was what made The difference, now you haven't really done anything that villainous.

Do you want to try something now that you've won? Do you want to gloat? Do you want to twirl your mustache? Winning is pretty villainous already. It's villainous to me, yeah. I don't, I don't know if I agree. You, you of

Michael: all people.

Ken: The dream is to win but not be villainous, but apparently not your dream. No, yeah, I go for winning but not villainous.

I don't know if I achieve it or not.

Michael: Talking villainous, I just wanted to say quickly, I receive a lot of mail, a lot of, um, a lot of DMs about the show. Some of it is lovely. Uh, some of it is not that lovely. I do read [00:09:00] all of it. I, um, don't respond to it, but I do take everything very seriously that is said.

One thing I don't take seriously and one thing I don't take lightly or kindly is The abuse over choices of contestants we put on this television program the contestants who make this program Are so smart. They are so brilliant I say often point three six percent of people who apply to be on Jeopardy Actually ever get a chance to be on this program to be good enough to get back onto JIT.

You have to just be an Extraordinary brain and extraordinary mind contestants on this program are there because of their brilliance within this game that tests their minds for no other reason and Amongst many other reasons, the idea that they're anything less than that is just thoroughly insulting.

Sarah: Well, and when it comes to JIT, all of these contestants have played again, many in recent [00:10:00] years, so they know exactly the type of scrutiny that they might face on social media, those types of things, and yet they make the choice to come here to show exactly who they are and how they play, and we applaud them for doing so and welcome them back.

Michael: Yeah, absolutely. You know, I also receive, um, uh, some sort of, you know, I would say some I wouldn't say abusive, but, uh, some very energized texts about, like, shot sequence and jib shots or, you know, uh, whether we show the scores, whether we show the categories, and this is all stuff that I actually, as Sarah knows, I talk about and think about on a daily basis.

Um, I would love it if you wrote that a little bit kinder to me, , uh, but, um, all about the delivery. Yeah, it's, but you know, I, I, I accept that this job comes with a, uh, a level of scrutiny. Uh, but I gotta tell you, there is a, there is a line at which I just, I just can't handle it. Anyway, here we go. Moving on to Tuesday's game, Skylar Hornback, regular Virginia, Margaret Shelton and [00:11:00] Jaskarin Singh.

Jaskarin caught fire in double jeopardy, forming a huge lead when Margaret lost 5, 000 on the last daily double. From there, Jaskarin secured a runaway win.

Sarah: Well, you knew we were going to do it. We were going to show the picture of Skyler from 2013 in Kids Week. I remember this game. You know, he made a 10, 000 daily double wager.

He ended up with 66, 600. So, great to have him back and to know all that he's doing with his life. You know, PhD student, pretty darn cool. Ken told him, it's so cool that being good at Jeopardy, At a young age, correlates to success in life. Uh, let's see how all the players are feeling after this game.

Ken: You were kind of shooting out the lights in that game just going, you attempted 46 clues, which is pretty remarkable against any level of play, much less all timers like these two.

Do you feel like your Jeopardy skills are still growing?

Uh, I don't know. I, what I do at home is I just like watch the episodes and then click with a pen. So I think, I [00:12:00] don't know. I don't know if it can get much faster. We'll see.

Ken: Well, it worked for you in this game. Skylar, I wanted to ask, what's it like to be a Jeopardy prodigy at such a young age?

Was there, did it affect your life in any way?

Oh my goodness. Uh, wow. The, like the small town famous kind of thing was, was really cool. They made me Grand Marshal of the Lincoln Days Parade. So that was a really big thing for like my county, LaRue County in Kentucky. And so it was, it was a truly incredible experience.

And one that when you all called me again, I said, absolutely. Do it in a heartbeat.

Ken: Well, you definitely show that you have not lost a step. Like you were right in the mix with two very tough players. It was lovely to see you all. Thanks for coming back and we'll see you in the semifinals. Jessica and congrats.

Michael: So good to see Jessica and back. I mean, such a cool cat, um, you know. Got on to TOC after winning the National College Championships, and I don't remember how he did. I don't think [00:13:00] he did make it out of the quarterfinals, but he came back here, won a really tough game, his stats were unbelievably impressive, um, and this is sort of a precursor to what happens later in the week that we're going to talk about Thursday's show as well, but it's a, to see the college players come back and do so well, that was wonderful.

Sarah: And I love that he says, well, I'm just, I'm watching the show and I'm practicing on a pen, which is often the pen that we give them, you know, it's a little push button pen. And that's, there's no secret. He's just watching the show. He's got his pen and obviously it is working well on Wednesday, we featured Emily Sands, Rachel Schwartz, and Jonathan Fisher close game between Emily and Jonathan.

They're battling throughout double jeopardy, but then, you know, they split the daily doubles. So heading into final. Emily had a small lead and then just secured that win because it was, in fact, a triple stumper.

Michael: Yeah, Emily carrying on the friendship bracelet tradition with her fellow JIT competitors, plus Ken Jennings.

Uh, Ken joked no [00:14:00] favoritism after showing his friendship bracelet. Yeah, he

Sarah: had it underneath. I mean, she made these for all the Champions Wildcard contestants, then it went on to TOC, now she's back with the friendship bracelets. I love it. It's kind of her thing and she said, you know, I don't know if it's cool anymore, but it's cool to her and She made them for us last year.

No favoritism either, but that was really kind. Um, another thing that Ken kept saying, you know, he's referring to them as the jitters. And then Emily was like, how about where the jitterbugs? So she's going to make jitterbug happen along with friendship bracelets.

Michael: Interesting.

Sarah: Yeah.

Michael: Great news.

Sarah: Uh, in the post game, you know, Jonathan told us that so much of what he knows.

Like, oh, you know, Myrmidon and Caesarean. This is all from Assassin's Creed! Video games! That's what you need to do to really get those, uh, deep level clues, apparently.

Michael: That's interesting. Good stuff. And

Sarah: now, a quick word from our sponsor. When you think about businesses that are selling through the roof, like Allo or Allbirds, sure, you think about a [00:15:00] great product and brilliant marketing, but an often overlooked secret is actually the businesses behind the business making selling and buying simple.

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And now back to inside Jeopardy.

Michael: Okay. On Thursday, we witnessed another excellent game between Raymond Goslow, Troy Meyer and Jackie Kelly. Raymond and Troy were tied heading into double Jeopardy after a [00:16:00] great first round. From there, Troy worked his way into the lead. But Raymond, thanks to a 5,000 daily double, took the lead and maintained it heading into final.

Both Raymond and Troy were correct. And it was Raymond who got the win, quite an upset, and a spot in the semifinals.

Sarah: Yeah, ending with a score of 39,601, that's the second highest we've seen all season behind only Will Yancey in Champions Wildcard in the semifinals. So just such a game. Again, the level.

Jackie also, like, couldn't get in as well on the buzzer, but really in there, this was a good game. Let's find out how Raymond was feeling after a very impressive win.

Ken: Well that was something to see. Now, I want to start with you, Troy, because I was looking at your stats. Uh, you had a dominant brain game in that game.

You were attempting 50 of those clues. That's the highest we've seen in the tournament, but you weren't always able to get in, right? This guy was unbelievable on the buzzer. What's your buzzer technique?

I can't believe it. My [00:17:00] hand is shaking so bad I don't know how it works.

Ken: That was your buzzer hand?

Apparently, you know, it

buzzes, you know, it moves in a little closer to the buzzer

Ken: Was it shaking like that before the game or is this a response to winning?

Um, it shakes kind of like that all the time, but I got to say in the game, you know in the game It does that after the game. It's not gonna calm down until I Go home and fall asleep

Ken: now.

Just current already made the semis and you two last faced off in the finals of the Jeopardy! National College Championship. Are you looking forward to playing to scar and again?

Uh, it would be really fun, but I'm not looking forward to it in the sense of like, it would be like a bulldozer coming over me.

Ken: You're not saying you're like guaranteeing a revenge. You're not Muhammad Ali here.

No, no, no. It's Jeopardy! It's you never know what happens on any given day, any given board, but you know, sure would be fun. So.

Ken: We don't know what the draw is going to be, but you're both in the semi finals. Congratulations, and that was a great game from all three of you.

Pleasure to watch. Thanks

Michael: for being here. Yeah, we should say Raymond [00:18:00] himself had 41 attempts. His buzz percentage was superb. Ended up with 23 correct responses. You know, in a game against elite competition is something else. And I think Raymond. You know, who we knew was good. We knew that that JNCC was, was impressive.

I think that, you know, that sort of upset the form books, though, for a lot of us. And Raymond, wow. Wow.

Sarah: That was a wow game. I think people went into it thinking, of course, Troy, finalist from the TOC, would come out on top. But that was a game. It's the reason we do this. And like you say, it's Jeopardy! You never know.

What's going to happen? Well, we closed out the week with Maya Wright, Roger Craig, and John Folkt. John got out to an early lead after a strong start in the Jeopardy round, but Roger on fire in Double Jeopardy, finding both Daily Doubles, adding 21, 000 to his score. Ending the double Jeopardy round with 36, 000 and a no doubt runaway.

Michael: I really enjoyed meeting, uh, Roger, [00:19:00] uh, during this tournament. He's somebody I watched on the show when I had no idea I was ever going to end up working at Jeopardy. Um, I enjoyed, uh, his original run, um, and, uh, what a player. Really impressive.

Sarah: Yeah, and I have known, uh, for a while now because obviously we have invited Roger and Julia in previous.

In the previous season. And so I've known that they are married happily for a while, but it's a secret. I have kept. I didn't even know that Roger was going to reveal it during his interview. And I was like, Oh, the secret's out. Another Jeopardy love story.

Michael: Wow. There you go.

Sarah: Yeah. How many

Michael: Jeopardy love stories are there?

Sarah: There are a lot. Um, like it comes from college Jeopardy and all different iterations of the show. But Roger and Julia reconnected at all stars. So that's kind of where they're at. Yeah. Their love kindled and look at them now. He's headed to the semifinals and he took every opportunity to thank Julia for, you know, giving him the time to be able to do this.

Well, Michael, it is time now for this week's host chat. An [00:20:00] audience member asked Ken, do you ever think that your 74 game win streak can

Ken: be broken? I think it can be beaten. Like I was here when, uh, Amy Schneider made like the last real run at it. Uh, I think the reason why I think it can be beaten one, because like, I know first hand it can be done, I was there, and second of all, I think there is like a plateau you hit where, like, you're just cruising, um, you know, you've had a lot more practice on the buzzer and on the set than your opponents have had, it's kind of an unfair home court advantage for the returning champion.

And I think at some point somebody is just going to hit that streak and they're going to glide and I'm excited that I might be here when it happens.

Sarah: I don't know. I don't know if it'll ever be broken. It's quite a run.

Michael: Ken might be here. I'm not sure I will be. Right. We'll see. Uh, we will see. Um, great stuff.

Sarah: Yeah, that's it, Michael. Oh. Brought us to another end of this week on Inside Jeopardy. Sam and I will be back next week to discuss the rest of the JIT quarterfinals, the first semifinal. We've got those [00:21:00] semifinals of Pop

Culture Jeopardy this week on Wednesday. We've got another Celebrity Jeopardy quarterfinal.

So go get your fill, watch all the shows, and we'll be back next week to talk about it.

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