

## Episode 1

[00:00:00] **Johnny Gilbert:** From the Alex Trebek Stage at Sony Picture Studios. This is Inside Jeopardy.

[00:00:08] **Michael Davies:** Oh, yes, the dulcet tones of Johnny Gilbert. It is Monday, August 1st and welcome to Inside Jeopardy!, your exclusive and official podcast destination for all things happening in the world of Jeopardy!. I'm Michael Davies. I'm joined by producer Sarah Foss, who many of you know as Clue Crew Sarah. And we're here, just steps away from the Alex Trebek Stage, where we are preparing to start shooting the new season, season 39 tomorrow.

[00:00:32] **Sarah Foss:** I feel like the eve of a new school year. Like I'm so excited. I'm a little nervous. After last season, I can't even imagine what this one will bring.

[00:00:40] **Michael Davies:** Yeah, so many new things, even some new things we haven't revealed yet. Despite my constant newsletter missives, including the big one from last week, which we're gonna talk about, but this podcast Inside Jeopardy!, why did we create it? Well, we wanna take our fans deep inside the show each week. We're gonna be discussing everything from the shows that have recently aired, taking you behind the scenes of our champions and contestants, even discussing judging decisions for the first time ever, gameplay analysis beyond the Jeopardata. And we're gonna be making official announcements about the show. I'll be here a lot, as well as producer Sarah, but we'll also be joined by other members of our producing and studio team and perhaps a former contestant or two.

[00:01:17] **Sarah Foss:** Yeah. One of the things we're really excited about is that we're going to bring you these interviews on the podcast. You know, the people you've been wanting to hear from. the questions you've been wanting answers to. We're gonna have those insightful conversations with our champions and members of our Jeopardy! community. You're gonna hear from some of our celebrity fans, and also the very important people that make up our Jeopardy! team, our staff and crew.

[00:01:38] **Michael Davies:** Yeah, it really does take a village to make this television program. I've been around television for my entire career, like 33 years, but it still blows me away how many people work at Jeopardy! How many people make the television program that you love Okay. Coming up in the next few

weeks, we should say we are going to be having the first ever joint interview with Mayim and Ken on this very podcast.

[00:02:02] **Sarah Foss:** The exclusive. You're gonna hear it all right here on Inside Jeopardy! What it's been like for them over the past year and a half. And it's just gonna be an exciting time to hear from both of our hosts together.

[00:02:13] **Michael Davies:** Yeah, we really have the, uh, organs of media protected here at Jeopardy! Now we've got my newsletter where I make the announcements, the end of the press release. And now we are gonna do our own interviews here with our own people.

[00:02:27] **Sarah Foss:** Okay. Yes. Speaking of your newsletter so much that you kind of hinted towards so many exciting announcements. I know our fans are anxious to hear more. Tell us more, Michael.

[00:02:36] **Michael Davies:** Okay, well, beyond the host announcement, that obviously was the lead in the newsletter. We put a lot of things out there. Some things didn't get as much attention as I thought they would. It was interesting, but that's the problem when you're me and you give away so much information in a single sentence or paragraph who knows what to focus on. I'm gonna get a little later to what I think was the biggest announcement that didn't really get a lot of press. And we're probably gonna talk about that more over the next few weeks, but first of all, we should say, we're entering this period of repeat shows. And for the first time ever, I think we have hand selected, because I think what's happened in the past, right Sarah, is that during the repeat part of the season, the six weeks between season 38 and season 39, in this case, we've just run, you know, tournaments, we rerun, you know, six weeks of tournaments

[00:03:21] **Sarah Foss:** Exactly. Whether it was a Tournament of Champions year or a Teacher's Tournament or College Tournament, Teen, whatever it was, we kind of would select three of those tournaments and rerun them.

[00:03:30] **Michael Davies:** Now, we only did one tournament this year in syndication. That was a professor's tournament. JNCC of course, was in primetime. So we didn't have that option, but also our feeling in this, you know, what has been frankly, a sensational, I would say historic season, certainly for me, because it was my first one.

[00:03:45] **Sarah Foss:** I've been here 21 years and I would say it's historic. So you're on the right track.

[00:03:49] **Michael Davies:** So it's been a historic season. We've had so many great episodes. We decided that this year we would take six weeks, 30 shows, and we would run, really amongst us producers, and we, we sat around and talked about it, our favorite episodes of the year, that would feature a number of our Second Chancers, that we're gonna announce later in the podcast, a number of our champions, the amazing champions we've had this season episodes, that featured them and just some of our favorite games.

[00:04:13] **Sarah Foss:** Yeah, we're kind of calling it "The Road to the TOC" and letting you see some of the great players and the moments that kind of formed the field. That will be, well, a pretty historic TOC as well.

[00:04:24] **Michael Davies:** And along with these repeats, we are debuting Jeopardy! highlights. This is something which, you know, you and I have been working back and forth on, uh, for months now just trying to get it right. You know, I get teased widely for constantly talking about that Jeopardy! is a sport. Um, and what do sports do? They have highlights. Like in all seriousness, a lot of people, a lot of our viewers, especially our younger viewers, don't have access to watch the show on a television station. They might not, they might have cut the cord to cable. They probably don't have the antenna hooked up and they rely on being able to see and follow Jeopardy! on social media. But, potentially some illegally shared files on Youtube.

[00:05:01] **Sarah Foss:** So we are gonna have highlights after every episode this season, but for now, you're gonna see them after every one of these six weeks specially selected reruns. And it's just the beginning because we're gonna have so much additional content on our Jeopardy! YouTube channel. So you're not gonna want to miss any of it!

[00:05:17] **Michael Davies:** Yeah, the highlights are not just something we're doing during repeats. We are gonna be now launching. We've got a whole team of editors sitting there, uh, watching the shows and editing and look, this is an experiment, like, let us know what you think. Give us feedback. We want to get this right. It's tough. There are 61 clues in a single episode of Jeopardy, we can't show all of the clues in three minutes. We can't show everything that happens during the game. We just had to sort of select what we felt was important. So you

can catch up. I've watched it, I love watching the highlights now. Um, I have a terrible memory. I often don't remember the episodes that have just played. Anyway, we're very, very excited about these repeats.

[00:05:52] **Sarah Foss:** I kind of picture it like if you're around the water cooler the next day at work, and someone's talking about a big daily double or moment missed, you can just go back to your computer real quick, plug in the highlight, watch it and you're gonna have everything, all the highlights right there.

[00:06:04] **Michael Davies:** Second thing we spoke about was Jeopardy! honors.

[00:06:06] **Sarah Foss:** That's right. We would be remiss if we didn't honor our late and legendary host Alex Trebek, it was just his birthday on July 22nd. He would've been 82. And so to pay tribute to not only him, but to others who have helped contribute to our lasting legacy here at Jeopardy!, we are so excited to announce the first ever Jeopardy! Honors Ceremony.

[00:06:27] **Michael Davies:** Now, this was your baby. You pitched this to me. I remember the pitch. I remember the deck. I remember every word. The second you mentioned it. I'm a big fan of the NFL Honors. I loved this idea from the second you mentioned it. We're still working on it. More details about this are gonna be coming up in the next couple of weeks, but we're really excited on Jeopardy! Honors. We're gonna be inducting our Inaugural Hall of Fame Class as part of Jeopardy! Honors, and we've thought a lot about into who should be inducted into our class of 2022. We're gonna be sharing that news really soon.

[00:06:55] **Sarah Foss:** And we're also gonna give awards to some of our most outstanding champions of this past season kind of in line with the NFL honors. So yeah, we're excited to reveal what those will be as well.

[00:07:05] **Michael Davies:** Okay. I mentioned a couple of other new initiatives. Uh, I talked about some special weeks. There's a little bit of questions, a lot of questions from, from fans out there. We're working on a High School Week. You know, it's been a while since we've done Teens. I sort of feel that, just like we do College that we should rebrand Teens and we should do it as High school. We loved Professors last season. In fact, last week, we'll talk about it in a bit. Last week was like a mini Professor's week on the final week of Season 38, but we've also started thinking, you know, I've had this, You know, often with me things start

as gags or things that make me smile. And then I realize, and people around me realize I'm completely serious.

So, um, I've been obsessed with this for a while and I've talked about it before that I wanna launch a Jeopardy! Book Club. Part of that inspiration was our Senior Researcher, Michael Harris, who's gonna be coming up later on the Inside Jeopardy!, but part of it also is these amazing librarians we've had on the Program.

And I've thought for a while that on Jeopardy, Which is literally about books, that game board is about books. Jeopardy is about books. The, the writers and researchers work in a room secreted away, uh, in a building on the Sony lot, which is just literally a library. Full of books. And so the idea of a Tournament of Librarians is something we've talked a lot about.

Maybe it's professors or librarians, we're still thinking about it. Maybe it's professors versus librarians. Maybe we build a whole competition. Uh, but that's the other special we're thinking about

[00:08:31] **Sarah Foss:** But wait, there's more, you want to expand the Jeopardy! verse even further maybe?

[00:08:35] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. Well, those are special weeks during the syndicated Jeopardy! Look for a while. I think that there are lots of really smart, brilliant people in this country who would make fantastic Jeopardy! contestants, but they know little of European, medieval history in Latin American geography, but they know everything about pop culture. Or they know everything about sports. You know, I'm a big sports fan. You know, this, uh, I laugh all the time. I'm constantly warned away by the writers and the producers on the show from doing too much sports on the show. And we do have quite a lot of triple stumpers. I know this is a joke out there in Jeopardy! world that when we ask sports questions, very often, our contestants are, you know, not great at it. We should say Amy Schneider, killer in any sports question that we put on the show.

[00:09:24] **Sarah Foss:** Yeah, that football category.

[00:09:28] **Michael Davies:** Yeah, she would've done well in, but it didn't fare well with our contestants a few years back, but we're certainly talking, we're certainly developing, uh, Sports Jeopardy! thinking of bringing that back. And we're also looking into building a pop culture version of Jeopardy! I did a show

several years ago for VH1 called the World Series of Pop Culture Pat Kiernan was the host. I'm really interested in, uh, bringing a pop culture version of Jeopardy. I know there was rock and roll Jeopardy.

**Sarah Foss:** Of course there was, hosted by Jeff Pope on VH1. That was fun. That was a really fun show.

[00:09:51] **Michael Davies:** But I think the biggest for me, the biggest announcement that actually got, partly because I put so much in that newsletter, that it got buried under only buried under the mess, was my dream about building Jeopardy! Masters. And we're gonna talk more about this, you know, on this podcast over the next few weeks, but look, I've thought for a long time, that GOAT, how often can we do GOAT? Really the greatest of all time, you know?

[00:10:15] **Sarah Foss:** Well, before Season 38, I probably would've given you a different response.

[00:10:19] **Michael Davies:** What would've the response have been before season 38?

[00:10:21] **Sarah Foss:** Maybe like every 20 years.

[00:10:24] **Michael Davies:** And now after doing it, what's your response.

**Sarah Foss:** We gotta do it now.

**Michael Davies:** Okay. So my whole thing. I think you probably can only do GOAT every 20 years. One of the first changes I made was, you know, establishing this Jeopardy! post season that we will do Tournament of Champions every single year at the same time. End of October, beginning of November. But the TOC is obviously just for the champions of the previous season this year, it sort of takes it a little bit of season 37 and moves into 38, but basically it's of our contemporary champions playing the TOC. And then there's GOAT that we do every 20 years. There is nothing [00:11:00] between that. You know, we do not have that. You know, what I think could be the biggest brand of Jeopardy! in my mind to see James Holzhauer now play against Amy Schneider and Matt Amodio and Mattea Roach and Ryan Long, you know, we've got so many great champions from the last, even just 10 years in the world of Jeopardy! who can compete on a master's prime time league. League, maybe is it a tournament? We've always done



tournaments, but is this maybe a league that goes to playoffs? That's part of my master's fantasy. My other part of my master's fantasy is figuring out a way to do this live

[00:11:40] **Sarah Foss:** This is the part that scares me.

[00:11:42] **Michael Davies:** I love it. And I'm terrified. I love live television. Electronics, we should say, in game shows make live production very difficult. For years people thought Who Wants To Be A Millionaire, which I used to produce, was live. It wasn't. We used to produce it the night before, edit it overnight and put it on the next day.

I think we could do Jeopardy! Live. I think it would require doing a half hour show in a one hour time period, which would require pregame perhaps Inside Jeopardy! around the whole thing. Perhaps pregame postgame, uh, you know, similar to an NBA game. Sometimes they have to stop because the shot clock doesn't work. And we might sometimes have to stop because the game board has malfunctioned in some way it does happen.

[00:12:22] **Sarah Foss:** Or the judges have to stop and discuss a ruling.

[00:12:24] **Michael Davies:** Yes, but I do, but maybe we get to talk about that. Maybe that's commentary. I just think a live version of Jeopardy! that, you know, the missing brand. I would actually freely give up all of these other extensions. The missing brand for me in the world of Jeopardy! is a primetime live program or a streaming live program where the very best Jeopardy! players of all time and currently compete against each other for everything. I just think that would be magnificent. I Get excited. I get almost teary [00:13:00] eyed thinking about it, Sarah.

[00:13:01] **Sarah Foss:** All right. Before you get too choked up, I wanna take a look back at the final week of season 38. What a week it was.

[00:13:07] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. Uh, an interesting week, as I said earlier, it was like mini professors week. It seemed that we'd done some casting for professors. We still have some good people, uh, left over. And we put a few of them into these episodes. Yeah. The, uh, first show of the week, Monday, July 25th, Ed Coulson, professor of economics, I believe, um, took down returning contestant, Karla

Fossett, superb performance in the double Jeopardy! round. But then there was that final Jeopardy!

[00:13:33] **Sarah Foss:** Oh Yes. The rock and roll hall of fame.

[00:13:35] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. Do you know what I love about final! Certainly with our best Final! Jeopardy clues, you learn something new every single time. And I found myself playing along with this one, um, watching it on repeat partly because I'd forgotten everything that had happened, uh, from producing this last moment. I immediately, uh, thought of Belinda. Just to bring you back, I thought of Belinda Carlisle.

[00:13:57] **Sarah Foss:** To bring you back the category and Final! The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The clue "honored in 1998 as part of a rock group and in 2019 as a solo. this singer was the first woman to be inducted into the hall twice."

[00:14:10] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. Karla Fossett, by the way, had a great guess, which was Beyonce. Yes. But there happens to be, as Ken reminded us and educated us, there is a 25 year. She's close. Yes. There's a 25 year lag, uh, before you can go into the hall of fame.

[00:14:26] **Sarah Foss:** Yeah. And the other guess of Gwen Stefani also close super, but not quite to the 25 year cutoff.

[00:14:29] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. I guessed Belinda Carlisle, that turned out to be incorrect, but it was, uh, Stevie Nicks.

[00:14:35] **Sarah Foss:** Yeah, and Ed guessed Tina Turner, which again, good guess, but not correct.

[00:14:39] **Michael Davies:** Yep. But still prevailed and won Tuesday's show. Uh, Ed had another strong performance, um, led with the most buzz attempts, buzzes, correct responses, uh, played solidly, had the lead going into Final Jeopardy! Once again, that Final Jeopardy, another great clue. Uh, the EOR answer.

[00:14:57] **Sarah Foss:** Oh yes. We all learned a lot on that one.

[00:14:59] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. And of course I learned that Americans say, hi, haw, not, EOR. I didn't realize that.



[00:15:07] **Sarah Foss:** You know what I loved about Ed, as you mentioned, the professor's tournament, he was actually our alternate. So if you're an alternate, you come to the tapings. And so he really gave a nod that his fellow professor tournament contestants were unknowingly serving as role models for him. You know, when he came back that second time around.

[00:15:22] **Michael Davies:** Yeah, Wednesday show, you know, professor, another professor, Brianne Barker, uh, arrived on the scene. Ended up taking down Ed. Her final, once again, that brilliantly worded thing, the clue was there, you know, the clue was within the clue and, uh, the answer Galileo that's who Milton was writing about

[00:15:42] **Sarah Foss:** The pin in the clue as the writers call it. Yeah. You know what I loved about her. She said she came for a fun adventure.

It became an even more fun adventure and Ed, when you talked to him after, he said, you know what? I'm just as nervous today as I was for my first show. So the Jeopardy! nerves, I guess they don't, they don't go away.

[00:15:58] **Michael Davies:** I remember actually that final, you could feel it on set, um, and Brianne was blown away when she ended up prevailing. Her reign unfortunately was short lived as Katrina Hill, a nonprofit professional, uh, from Arlington I believe, came in and won \$27,601, uh, for her single day win a fantastic performance, but not the only notable thing that happened in that episode.

[00:16:21] **Sarah Foss:** No, probably one of my favorite moments also of the season West Virginia and regular Virginia as a category. If you watched Margaret Shelton's run earlier in the season, you know that one of the contestants had rung in incorrectly with West Virginia. So she said, what is Regular Virginia in her perfect accent. And Ken of course said, yeah, regular original recipe, Virginia. Yeah. So gotta love our writers for calling back that game moment. It made for a great moment for all of us to relive.

[00:16:47] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. Fantastic. And I was talking fantastic. Probably my favorite episode of the week, the Friday episode. What a way to finish, uh, this legendary season 38. Luigi De Guzman. What a [00:17:00] character, what a player, what a game. He seemed to like the categories he got, he made a total of 49 buzz attempts. Impressive play had a strong lead going into Final Jeopardy!, smartly waged, uh, in Final Jeopardy! I think it was as lasers. It's great to finish the

season with lasers. That was great. Uh, was able to secure his win. He took him \$23,401. He's spending months now as a returning champion.

[00:17:23] **Sarah Foss:** Yeah, that's the best feeling. This is the kind of game we loved because all three of them were in contention heading into final. One thing to note in the final game of season 37 last year, super champion, Matt Amodio had won his 18th game with get this 24 correct responses and two incorrect responses. Luigi De Guzman fittingly had the same exact amount of correct and incorrect responses for finishing season 38. So I don't know. What does that mean? For his future.

[00:17:48] **Michael Davies:** Wow. That is amazing. Our stats department.

[00:17:52] **Sarah Foss:** Oh yes, Carlos Martinez.

[00:17:54] **Michael Davies:** Well done Carlos, uh, fantastic work. We should say that Ken, uh, ended the final episode of [00:18:00] the season, um, by saying, as Alex used to say “so long”, it was a really beautiful moment. I saw, uh, you know, some moist eyes on the set at that point.

[00:18:09] **Sarah Foss:** Absolutely. All right. Well, season 38 has come to an end, but let's just take a look back at what a truly remarkable season it was. It's unlike anything I have ever seen. We had of course, 44 weeks of Jeopardy! in syndication. We saw a total of 456 contestants, 441 of them during the regular season and 15 for our professor's tournament. We witnessed five super champions. Amy Schneider with her 40 games, Matt Amodio with 38 games, Mattea Roach with 23, Ryan Long with 16, Jonathan Fisher, oh, with a mere 11. Amy, Matt, Matta, and Ryan have all made it to what we are calling The Leaderboard of Legends. And I would be remiss if I didn't say that four of the five in our top five are now from this season alone.

[00:18:56] **Michael Davies:** And how many within the top 10 or top 10? Five, That's just amazing. Five top 10. Has there ever been, what would be the second biggest season of all time after season 38? Maybe that's something we need to give to Carlos Martinez to look at.

[00:19:08] **Sarah Foss:** I think people are saying 2019, but we'll, we'll put the stats team on that to make sure I'm accurate.

[00:19:13] **Michael Davies:** Okay. Uh, and beyond those, by the way, so many other great players, uh, multiple day winners who are going into our TOC, um, I have some dark horse ideas, uh, certainly going through that Jeopardata of some other people who are not those named super champions who may compete really, really well based on their, uh, data performance. And a lot of this has been shared by our fans on Twitter and on Reddit. But there are a lot of very competitive players coming to that Tournament.

[00:19:43] **Sarah Foss:** I gotta give you one more, one more number that our accounting department provided for me. In season 38, the total prize money awarded \$6,620,618. Now that includes tournaments and our second and third place, uh, winnings, but what a number. Over six and a half million dollars in season 38.

[00:20:04] **Michael Davies:** Wow. We should say JNCC also had 36 contestants and \$835,000, in Prizes. I mean, you know, the question I get asked a lot is why, why there are suddenly all of these super champions, the one thing I've started to think about more is the changing nature of general knowledge. And I sort of have some experience on this having, you know, made quiz shows also in the 1990s, I think the first quiz show I ever did was a quiz show with Wink Martindale called Debt. Then I did Win Ben Stein's Money then, uh, Millionaire. And ESPN's Two Minute Drill in the World Series of Pop Culture, which I mentioned earlier. But I do think that the nature of knowledge has changed a lot. And I think that perhaps 30 years ago, Jeopardy!, you know, was, you know, another game show where, because everybody shared a lot of the same knowledge. It was not extraordinary to watch people or not as extraordinary to find people who, you know, know everything from Latin American Geography to Medieval European History, to Early Two Thousands Hip Hop, perhaps a few, uh, you know, little bit of sports, word play, science, the incredible range that we ask people, perhaps 30 years ago when more Americans shared the same inspirations, they shared the same education. They shared the same syllabus, but they probably read the same books. They read the same magazines. They knew the same thing as the world has changed as the internet of course has changed everything. And also, as we are, you know, on the first few steps of definitely diversifying the material that we ask our contestants to know, perhaps Jeopardy! is more exceptional. Perhaps what we're asking is so much more exceptional to find a single human in this sort of modern world [00:22:00] who knows so much about old school knowledge and new school knowledge, and knowledge that people on the east coast know, people on the west coast know, knowledge that people who are young know, knowledge that people are older know, it is just more extraordinary. So to me, The people that can truly go

out and dominate in a game of Jeopardy! are rarer than ever. And so when they get a chance, when they get on and specifically as has been mentioned, when they start winning, they are more extraordinary because to know everything today is different than knowing everything 30 years ago, when everybody seemed to be drinking from the same cup of knowing everything. We're now drinking from such a large bowl that this kind of knowledge is so rare and it's what makes these super champions, you know, so admirable.

[00:22:45] **Sarah Foss:** My answer is much simpler. I just think after the loss of Alex Trebek and everything the show has gone through, if you believe in them, I think the game show gods are just smiling brightly down upon us.

[00:22:56] **Michael Davies:** I love the game show gods. Merv, Monty, Alex, everybody up there looking upon our little quiz show. Okay. Onto our second chance competition. This we should say was gonna be a big announcement, huge, huge announcement, breaking news. During the first episode of Inside Jeopardy! Unfortunately, or fortunately in their enthusiasm, our social and digital team, uh, woke up this morning and immediately posted the Tournament brackets at Jeopardy.com.

So already widely across the deverse the news of who is gonna be playing in this second chance competition has Spread. However, uh, we still think it would be good for us to talk a little bit about who the names are to reinforce them and to talk about why they were.

[00:23:38] **Sarah Foss:** Yeah. And first off for the structure, if you didn't log on to jeopardy.com yet, and you're wondering how it's gonna work. It's 18 players, we've chosen 18 of the best contestants who we feel deserve a Second Chance. We're gonna do two, one week competitions. So each week we'll feature nine players. They will each play in a quarter final game of sorts. And then they will go on to a two game final total point affair. The winner of each week will advance to the Tournament of Champions. So that means two spots in this year's TOC are going to Second Chance players.

[00:24:07] **Michael Davies:** Oh, my word. I can't wait for this. Okay. Now we are gonna reveal the 18 contestants or re-reveal the 18 contestants who have made it, uh, to the Jeopardy! Second Chance Competition to help us take a deeper look we'd like to welcome. Oh, my word. So excited to see his face again. Jeopardy! Senior

Researcher & Gameplay Analyst, Michael Harris. Michael, welcome to Inside Jeopardy!

[00:24:29] **Michael Harris:** Thank you, Michael. Glad to be here. I am excited. Hi, Sarah. Glad to see you.

[00:24:33] **Sarah Foss:** One of you should have changed your name. I think this could get confusing.

[00:24:36] **Michael Davies:** Michael and Michael. Well, Michael Harris, Michael Harris. All right. He gets his full name. Michael Harris. Every single time.

[00:24:40] **Sarah Foss:** I'm gonna set you up for this one, Michael Harris. The first name is Jack Weller. You may remember him from season 37, our law student originally from San Diego, California. Now he had some tough odds because he came in, competing against Brian Chang who went on to win seven games and will be in the TOC.

[00:24:57] **Michael Harris:** Okay. For those of you who have your brackets on the [00:25:00] wall, you might want to take note, Jack snagged, both daily doubles in the DJ round and both heavy wagers of \$4,000 each. And it came down to a rare tiebreaker, but he wasn't as quick on the buzzer as Brian Chang, he's obviously a go big or go home kind of wager guy. And, uh, he has the knowledge to give anyone a run for their money.

[00:25:22] **Sarah Foss:** You know what I love about our Jeopardy! community, that Brian Chang himself went on social media and suggested Jack Weller for second chance. As soon as he heard about it, I love the way our contestants support each other. So, Hey, guess what? You get your wish, Brian, and you could be seeing Jack in the TOC. All right, next up, we go into James Fraser, a Naval aviator from Newport beach, California. There's an interesting story about James. He originally got slotted in 2019 to play against James Holzhauer. Wow. But what you may or may not know about Jeopardy! is that we never have two people, as I just told you about this confusing, the same name with the same name would make it very difficult for our hosts.

So we give our players the option. You can go by a nickname or you can choose to come [00:26:00] back and play at a later date. Well, James made the decision to come back at a later date, but due to deployment, we weren't able to feature him until season 37. He played a great game. Like, you know, Michael.

[00:26:11] **Michael Harris:** Yeah. He had a strong correct response of 22 and this helped him take the lead going into Final Jeopardy! without the aid I might say, of any daily double boost. Wow. He's a solid player who is clearly dangerous clue by clue. So imagine if he hits more daily doubles in his second chance.

[00:26:29] **Michael Davies:** We should say, by the way that, you know, we're talking about two season 37 people immediately going into the Second Chance competition, you know, can you talk a little bit about the cutoff date?

[00:26:39] **Sarah Foss:** Well, yeah, the cutoff date people remember it well, because it was the big competition between Brian Chang and Zach Newkirk. They both were well beyond the qualifying and yet they didn't make the cutoff. So we had the same criteria for our Second Chance competitors as we did for our TOC competitors. So they are all people who played after that cutoff. Okay. Next up, we have Nikki Porcaro, an educational consultant and tutor originally from Lebanon, New Jersey.

[00:27:05] **Michael Harris:** Nikki had 34 buzzer attempts. And just so you can understand buzzer attempts shows a certain amount of confidence, like, you know, your material, you're secure. And so you're buzzing in.

So Nikki had 34 buzzer attempts, which is just below the TOC average of 38 and an impressive 95% response rate, which is just off the charts. Obviously a strong player who will be more mindful of her wagering going into her second chance. So watch out.

[00:27:32] **Michael Davies:** Okay. We should say that Michael Harris, perhaps, uh, more obsessed with buzzer attempts than any other member of the Jeopardy! staff, and for a good reason, Please explain, uh, your job during taping, uh, on Jeopardy!

[00:27:45] **Michael Harris:** Okay. So during taping, I am what they call The Enabler. And I have a little box in front of me, such a good name. And, and as you know, they, uh, can't ring, the contestant cannot ring in until our host is finished, reading the clue. And the moment that happens I hit a little button, the indicator lights go on, the contestants know that their buzzers are open. They can now ring in and make a response to our clues. So it's a, it's a fast race. Um, and it's one of the things I love about what I do on the show.



[00:28:14] **Michael Davies:** Michael Harris is a Jeopardy! God, I just, uh, I love that. And we should say that, you know, one thing that, you know, one of the reasons that we launched Jeopardata is, is we started to look at the buzzer data we noticed that the people who tended to win were not the people who were quickest on the buzzer, but they tended to be the people who make the most attempts, the people who solve the puzzle of what that Jeopardy! clue is and realize that they have a shot and that they buzz in.

[00:28:42] **Sarah Foss:** And there's so much that goes into it because you know, our contestants have to anticipate the white lights that you have so honorably enabled, but not over anticipate them because if you buzz in before the lights are enabled, you're locked out for a portion of a second. That could be the difference between getting in and buzzing. So before we [00:29:00] move on, I think the only person that may be more excited about Nikki coming back than me is One Eclectic Mom on Twitter, Lilly, who does fashion because Nikki had quite a fashion sense on her first appearance. She even had her jacket custom made, so I'm excited to see her performance and also her fashion come Second Chance.

[00:29:16] **Michael Davies:** Okay, Second Chance competitor number four.

[00:29:19] **Sarah Foss:** All right. Next up, we have Rowan Ward now, Rowan competed in season 37 as **Nicolle Neulist**, they have since changed their name. So from a stats perspective, you may be a little confused, but this is Rowan Ward and they came to play because they competed against Matt Amodio, 38 game winner, in his final game of season 37.

[00:29:42] **Michael Harris:** Yeah. And Rowan had a high buzzer attempt at 42, which is above the TOC average, um, which fits, uh, they were the, one of the few contestants to actually even give Matt Amodio a run for his money in Final Jeopardy! In that game, Rowan had a 22 correct [00:30:00] response rate, which was only too lower than Matts in that game.

And an incorrect, Final Jeopardy! is what stopped Rowan from being a giant killer, but they could be a giant themselves. So watch out in Second Chance.

[00:30:12] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. I read a lot on social media. A lot of people advocating for Rowan out there.

[00:30:16] **Sarah Foss:** Yeah, that was a close last game in season 37. I think Matt Amodio was pretty relieved to make it not only to the season end, but to a new season. All right. Next up, we have Tracy Pitzel. She's our first contestant from season 38, an accountant from Ellenburg Washington. Now Tracy lost also to Matt, but this time in his 24th game. Her stats were though some of the best that we looked at.

[00:30:38] **Michael Harris:** Yeah. Sarah, another strong player with 40 buzzer attempts and without the help of any daily doubles, just her correct response of 20. So her racking up an impressive \$17,000 and bringing it all down to Final Jeopardy! with Matt. Again, an incorrect response was the only thing that stopped her from breaking Matt's streak. Her second chance could be the chance to redeem herself in a big way.

[00:31:01] **Sarah Foss:** Well, we're heading now to Jessica Stevens, a statistical research specialist from Nashville, Tennessee. She's the one who got you thinking about Second Chance, Michael.

[00:31:10] **Michael Davies:** She was. She's the very inspiration for this. Yeah. Uh, after she, uh, came in second in the episode where we lost Matt Amodio, where his streak ended, um, Jonathan Fisher, uh, was the winner of that game. But Jessica came in second. Yeah. What a game it was as well.

[00:31:26] **Sarah Foss:** Yeah. She had the unlucky matchup against two Jeopardy! greats.

[00:31:30] **Michael Harris:** Yeah. So obviously Jessica can compete with the big dogs, for sure. A solid 35 buzzer attempts with 14, correct response. And not missing any of the clues in which she buzzed in on. She actually bested Matt Amodio's score. But as Michael noted, she fell to Jonathan Fisher who went on to his own winning spree. So when she gets in, she is clearly a threat and I feel she's going to take full advantage of her Second Chance.

[00:31:56] **Sarah Foss:** I'm so looking forward to Second Chance, just going through all these names next up, [00:32:00] we have Cindy Zhang, a user experience designer from New York, New York. Now I wanna hear the stats from you, Michael, but what was most impressive to me is how beautifully Cindy wrote her name? Oh yeah. In her podium. One of the best handwritten names I've ever seen.

[00:32:14] **Michael Harris:** Well, Cindy's game play was as beautiful as her writing Sarah. A solid correct response, average of 21 with only two incorrect, her 34 buzzer attempts means she's definitely competitive. Her opponents will have to be on their toes as she comes down to Final Jeopardy!, uh, to decide the outcome.

[00:32:30] **Sarah Foss:** All right, next up, we have Jeff Smith, a music educator from San Diego, California. Talk about the stats of a champion, Michael.

[00:32:37] **Michael Harris:** Wow. Yeah, Jeff had an impressive 48 buzzer attempts, 25, correct response, average missing only three. That he rang in on he's a bold wager and which cost him in his Final Jeopardy! round, unfortunately. But if he racks up similar stats in his second chance, he will definitely be the player to beat.

[00:32:55] **Sarah Foss:** All right. We've got Molly Karol next, a CPA from Austin, Texas. Wow. She came up against Andrew He, losing by only a dollar, as we know, Andrew was a five game winner who lost to Amy Schneider.

[00:33:10] **Michael Harris:** . Yeah. Her buzzer attempts rate of 43, make her a top tier player for sure.

Losing only as Sarah pointed out by a dollar to champion Andrew He, uh, it demonstrated her ability to wager and handle Final Jeopardy! So her Second Chance opponents will have to bring their buzzer a game if they match up with her.

[00:33:29] **Michael Davies:** Yeah, certainly. I think Andrew He is gonna be one of the strongest competitors in the TOC, his stats would certainly say so. Okay. This is fantastic. And you know what? I don't wanna give short shrift to the next nine, uh, by running through this too quickly, Michael, this was brilliant. Thank you so much.

**Michael Harris:** Thank you very much. My pleasure

**Michael Davies:** Welcome to the first ever episode of Inside Jeopardy! It's been fantastic to have you, will you come back next week?

**Michael Harris:** Yeah, for sure.

**Michael Davies:** Okay, good. And same time, same place. Yeah. We know where you live. We know where you live and uh, we'll go through the next nine next week, but [00:34:00] that was absolutely fantastic. Uh, you can, by the way, head to [jeopardy.com/secondchance](http://jeopardy.com/secondchance) to view the Second Chance structure as well as all of the contestants that have been selected all 18, not just the nine we spoke about today. Uh, now obviously you're gonna be seeing Tournaments of Champions, uh, contestie during these reruns. I'm sure you're wondering what that format is gonna look like for that.

[00:34:19] **Sarah Foss:** People are wondering Michael, they wanna know they have lots of thoughts about it.

[00:34:22] **Michael Davies:** And who is qualified, well we're gonna be bringing that news to you very soon here on Inside Jeopardy! Uh, we'll tell you exactly when at the end of this broadcast.

[00:34:30] **Sarah Foss:** Can we just tell them that it is a new structure? Could we say that much?

[00:34:34] **Michael Davies:** Oh yeah, we can. It is a new structure.

[00:34:34] **Sarah Foss:** It's a new structure, so just stay tuned for that.

[00:34:37] **Michael Davies:** Okay. Uh, look, you've sent us so many questions for this podcast, this first Inside Jeopardy! and, and a regular feature of this podcast is going to be answering your questions. That's one of our stated goals in launching this. We wanted to take a question. We obviously had a lot of questions about the hosts. Um, uh, look, a lot of people at Jeopardy! now want to, you know, move on and get back to making the show. We're so excited to have both Mayim and Ken on the program. We got a question from Nathan and he writes now that both Ken Jennings and Mayim Bialik are the hosts, how would each host be introduced when coming out on stage? Uh, I have gotten this question a lot. I should have put this, I should have put this in the newsletter originally, uh, because last season, because Mayim, we had to deal with as the host of Jeopardy! to do the Prime Time show. She was the host of Jeopardy!, Ken cause he was guest hosting was hosting Jeopardy!. They will, now both, I can officially announce, be referred to as they walk out on stage as the host of Jeopardy!

[00:35:44] **Sarah Foss:** Yes. Johnny Gilbert will introduce them exactly the same. So that's just one question, but this is a great sign as Michael said, of what we wanna do here on the show, we want to answer your questions. People are hypothesizing all the time about what us producers are doing or thinking. Well, now you can ask us and we're gonna give you the real honest answers. So go ahead and send us any questions at [insidejeopardypodcast@gmail.com](mailto:insidejeopardypodcast@gmail.com). We're gonna answer your questions each week on the podcast. So we look forward to hearing more.

[00:36:10] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. And we'll do way more than one. Uh, we intend this to be

**Sarah Foss:** Right. We had a lot to talk about today.

**Michael Davies:** Yeah, we had a large rundown, but I think that's just about it for this first ever episode of Inside Jeopardy! Next week. We've got a little bit more Second Chance business. Nine more contestants to talk about our thinking and talk about their exceptional games that caught our attention and the reasons we're bringing them back.

[00:36:33] **Sarah Foss:** And then on August 15th, we're gonna reveal the Tournament of Champions field. We've heard so much discussion about it. So many people talking about who they think should be in, who should be out. We're gonna tell you who's in and we're gonna tell you about the all new structure.

[00:36:46] **Michael Davies:** Yeah. You have to remind me what that all new structure is before we do that. Uh, closer to the beginning of the season, as we said earlier, we're gonna have the first ever joint interview with Mayim and Ken right here on the podcast.

[00:36:56] **Sarah Foss:** And also next week, we're going to do some game recap of the first week of these specially selected reruns. So you're gonna hear why we chose these episodes and what made them so fanstastic.

[00:37:06] **Michael Davies:** Please make sure you subscribe to Inside Jeopardy!, rate us, leave us a comment, share it across social, uh, with all of your friends, follow us at Jeopardy! on Twitter, on Instagram, on Facebook and on YouTube. Ultimately we do plan to offer this in video, also, Sarah.

[00:37:20] **Sarah Foss:** We do, and because we think you can never get enough Jeopardy!, starting today, you can catch 24/7 Alex Trebek hosted Jeopardy! episodes streaming on Pluto TV.

[00:37:31] **Michael Davies:** Yeah, that's a great step for the show.