

Tales From 'Jeopardy!'

College of Humanities
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Appearing on "Jeopardy!" was a childhood dream come true for UA instructor **Tucker Dunn**.

And it wasn't a surprise that his experience teaching in the College of Humanities' Center for English as a Second Language ? as well as his degrees in linguistics and German studies ? came in handy in joining the ranks of "Jeopardy!" champions. Here are some tales from behind the scenes, presented in the style of the classic quiz show.

Alex Trebek for 200

"He's funny, but it's a dry, snarky humor," Dunn says.

The longtime "Jeopardy!" host is friendly with contestants and has a down-to-earth attitude on the set. During breaks between filming, he fields questions from the audience. "He said he feels like he knows a lot of the answers, especially having hosted for so long, but what would make or break him would be the buzzer, which is true for everybody."

College Degrees for 400

Dunn's studies at the UA were helpful at times on the show, but not always in the way he expected. "My first category was German history, and I thought I'd do great. I was a German major and I did know all five questions, but I didn't get to answer any of them because the champ was faster," he says.

He used his knowledge of word origins to piece together a correct answer to his first Final Jeopardy question, using a big wager to vault into first place: The brightest star in Scorpius is named this, meaning "rival" of the god equivalent to Mars. "I know Mars was Ares, so then I thought about the rival as an opposite and the anti- prefix and came up with Antares," he says. "My linguistics background definitely came in handy."

Kevin Durant for 600

Dunn's episodes ^[1] aired during the NBA Finals, which unfortunately caused two of his episodes to be pre-empted in Tucson. However, a clip of Dunn correctly answering a question about Golden State Warriors free agent Kevin Durant went viral.

"That's something I didn't expect, being in **Sports Illustrated** ^[2], **USA Today** ^[3] and the **The Washington Post** ^[4]," he says. "That certainly added a silver lining."

The Beatles for 800

Coming from a musical family, Dunn enjoys singing karaoke and plays once a year in a cover band with his brother. A Beatles superfan, he had mixed results on Fab Four-based questions.

"Some friends were disappointed I got one of the questions about Beatles movies wrong. I said "Hard Day's Night" like an idiot when the answer was "Eight Days a Week," he says. "Later on, they asked about the movie 'Can't Buy Me Love' with Patrick Dempsey, so I felt happy I got a Tucson-related question right."

Family for 1000

Dunn's cheering section in Sony Pictures Studios was his wife, who played Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" that morning for inspiration, and mother, who let out a gasp Dunn could hear from the stage when she saw his final wager was enough to capture a come-from-behind victory.

"I come from a family full of Wildcats. My stepdad is a professor and choir director and my mom sings in his choir. My brother and stepbrother both have UA bachelor's degrees. My wife is a UA graduate in retailing and now she's working on her second degree in ecology and evolutionary biology. It's a very U of A family."

Double Jeopardy

The waiting is the hardest part. Dunn filmed the show in February and had to keep the results under wraps until the show aired in June.

"It was so difficult not to say anything. My wife and my mother were in the audience watching, so they knew. I told a few people in my family and swore them to secrecy. But it was hard to sit on that info."

Final Jeopardy

Dunn finished his streak on "Jeopardy!" as a three-day champion, winning \$40,999. First priorities are paying off student loans and upgrading the family car.

After his episodes aired, Dunn was invited to join a private Facebook group for "Jeopardy!" contestants.

"One of the big topics is what people do with their prize money. Somebody said that you have to buy yourself at least one thing that's frivolous because that's your trophy. For mine, I haven't decided exactly, but I'm going to get a comic book, something rare, like an X-Men first appearance probably."

Source URL: <https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/tales-jeopardy>

Links:

[1] <https://uanews.arizona.edu/story/ua-faculty-member-compete-jeopardy-week>

[2] <https://twitter.com/SInow/status/874417987427590144>

[3] <http://ftw.usatoday.com/2017/06/jeopardy-trolled-kevin-durant-video-warriors-thunder-nba-finals-cavs-game-5>

[4] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/early-lead/wp/2017/06/12/jeopardy-tweaks-kevin-durant-for-leaving-thunder-to-sign-with-warriors/?utm_term=.80de0527b0af