



Jeopardy host Alex Trebek and Kyle Kahan



Kahan still keeps in touch with his fellow Jeopardy competitors

Katyite Competes on COLLEGE JEOPARDY

Mayde Creek Graduate, Kyle Kahan Wins \$10,000 and Has the Time of His Life

Written by Shetye Cypher & Select Photography by Suzi Issa

As the timer music plays on *Jeopardy*, Kyle Kahan thinks of the answer to the question Alex Trebek has just asked him. As he nails it, he moves ahead. Recently, Kahan, a 2007 Mayde Creek High School graduate, was a contestant on the college championship edition of the popular quiz TV show, *Jeopardy*. “It was just an incredibly fun and rewarding experience unlike anything I have ever done,” he shares. “Between the nerves, the anxiousness, the joy from answering a question, the despair from waiting on whether or not I made the wildcard spot, everything combined just made for an amazing time.” He adds, “Being able to meet Alex Trebek was just incredible in itself. But the best part about this experience (aside from the money, I love the money) was the new friends I made. The 15 of us still remain close via Facebook, and we now share a unique bond.”



Kahan was the ninth competitor to make it to the championship round



Kahan and his mom, with their stash of Jeopardy memorabilia she had made for him as souvenirs of the experience

Trivial Pursuits

Kahan's experience with trivia competitions began during his years at MCHS, where he joined the academic challenge team his sophomore year. He says he was a bit timid at first, but kept going to the meetings and became better at answering questions. "Academic challenge helped me a lot as it gave me a general idea on how the buzzer felt," he says. "It also trained me to be able to recall trivia quickly and recognize key words that lead to an answer. Academic challenge also helped me develop as a person, as it made me more confident in myself and bonded me closer to my friends."

Kahan, 21, is currently a senior at Texas A&M University majoring in economics with a minor in history. He plans on attending law school next year. Kahan is also the head of the Texas A&M Quiz Bowl team and enjoys competing in trivia-like games. "It's a rush that involves my favorite pastime," he shares. "The ability to remember something as obscure as Calaveras County and recall it quickly is just an amazing feeling. I've always enjoyed trivia, and to be able to put it to use is just really fun."

The Road to the Championship

His journey to the *Jeopardy* college championship began last February, when he passed the TV show's online test and traveled to Raleigh, NC in June to audition, take another test, and be judged by the *Jeopardy* team. The next day, he took his LSAT to get into law school. "I didn't even think about the show again until mid-September when I received a call from an unknown area code while I was in the computer lab studying Aztec gods for quiz bowl," he recalls. "I answered and the caller identified herself as Maggie Speak, who after confirming some details and legal mumbo-jumbo, invited me to be on the show."

He still remembers how he felt after hearing those words. "I felt elated, ecstatic, and a sense of jubilation," says Kahan. "I had transcended any happiness I had previously felt before. The fact that it was completely unexpected only helped upgrade the moment to even further heights. It was just perfect. I was jumping outside the building - I ran out of the lab and left my books behind as soon as Maggie identified herself - and I could not stop smiling. A full month of smiling. My jaw began to hurt, but I did not care."



Kyle Kahan, a graduate of Mayde Creek High School, won \$10,000 competing on *Jeopardy*

To prepare for the show, he relied on help from a professor at Texas A&M, along with several trivia-related websites. "One of the people I have to thank immensely is Dr. Russ Schumacher, a Texas A&M professor," says Kahan. "He's not even in my department, but I tracked him down to ask for his help. Dr. Schumacher won the tournament of champions (in 2003 I believe), so I made sure to ask him for any tips. He ended up being incredibly helpful as he provided

two thick tomes of information. I also used sporcle.com, wikipedia (wikisurfing on it, just clicking random things and building from there), mentalfloss.com, and just any information I could find."

Challenges & Triumphs

As for being on the show, which aired in November, Kahan experienced some challenges. "Trying to compose myself and remain calm when I had difficulty buzzing in was a challenge," he shares. "It could get frustrating knowing the answer, but being constantly beaten by the others even though you're positive you have beaten them. Then the conspiracy theories start flowing in your mind, and the anger, the rage, the pain. Then you buzz in and get one right and move on." He adds, "Also, the buzzer is just ridiculous. I could never get a full grasp on the timing for it. That's what makes it a game, though."

Kahan reached the semifinals of the tournament, despite losing the first game. He had enough money at the end of that game to be the final wildcard spot. The five winners of the quarterfinal games advanced, and the four highest non-winners also advanced, meaning nine of the 15 advanced. Kahan was the ninth.

He lost the semifinal game to the eventual winner Erin McLean from Boston University, earning \$10,000 in the process. "I'm going to put some of it towards a trip this summer I plan on taking with some friends," he says. "The rest will most likely go towards either law school or making myself more comfortable during law school." KM

SHETYE CYPHER is a freelance writer who has enjoyed living in Katy with her family intermittently since 1976. She is also the journalism teacher and publications advisor at Mayde Creek High School.

Caring for Women of Each Generation

Well Woman Exams • Gardasil Vaccine • In-Office Procedures • Routine Pregnancy Care • Family Planning
Bone Mineral Density Evaluations • Menopausal Counseling & Treatment • Nutritionist Available



G. Russell Edwards, M.D.



Selina Lin, M.D.



Nina Ibe, WHNP-BC

Obstetric & Gynecologic Affiliates of Katy

1331 W. Grand Parkway N., Ste. 240
Katy, Texas 77493
281.392.2266
www.obgynaffiliates.net

NovaSure
Control the Bleeding. Restore your life.

© 2010 Katy Magazine