

## Fans hail Trebek's last great champion as Smith's winning streak ends

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Brayden Smith's winning streak on "Jeopardy!" came to an end Tuesday, but longtime fans are praising the locally-connected contestant as late host Alex Trebek's last great champion.

Smith, 24, grandson of Crawfordsville resident Wanda Smith, lost to San Francisco attorney Manisha Munshi on his sixth appearance on the game show. His cash winnings totaled more than \$117,000.

"I just wanted to stay there as long as possible," Brayden Smith said in an interview posted on the show's social media pages. "It's a really great feeling to be on the set, to be around smart, nice, warm people — and to be around Alex who, you know, has been sort of a mainstay in my life."

Brayden Smith's episodes were taped just weeks before Trebek's death from pancreatic cancer in November. Trebek's final shows are airing this week. On Twitter, viewers across the country said Brayden Smith was a "final gift" to Trebek.

The Las Vegas native was studying criminal justice reform at libertarian think tank Cato Institute when he appeared on the show, which he grew up watching with his family.

"His goal has been to be on 'Jeopardy!' as long as he was old enough to have those kinds of goals, I guess," said his father Scott Smith, a 1984 graduate of North Montgomery High School.

After dominating the games early on, Brayden Smith faced tougher competition when the show returned from encore episodes after the holidays. The contestants struggled to stay in the positive during the first round of Tuesday's episode.

"We watch every night and it's one of the most difficult ones we've seen outside of the Tournament of Champions," Scott Smith said.

The winning streak makes Brayden Smith eligible for the tournament, which before Trebek's death had been scheduled to tape in February.

Texts came in from the show's other well-known Las Vegas champion James Holzhauer, who won 32 games and the Tournament of Champions in 2019. Holzhauer's wife invited Brayden Smith to join their pub trivia team.

Brayden Smith plans to attend law school and wants to work for the government as an attorney, his father said.

“He’s determined and I’m pretty sure he’ll accomplish what he has in mind,” Scott Smith said.