



“Jeopardy!” Champion Brayden Smith Has Died At 24

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Five-time “Jeopardy!” champion Brayden Smith has died unexpectedly, his mother said in a tweet on Friday.

Smith, 24, was praised online as “Alex’s Last Great Champion,” and was one of the final contestants to appear on the show with host Alex Trebek before he died of pancreatic cancer in November.

“He was kind, funny and absolutely brilliant,” the show said on Twitter Friday. “Our deepest condolences go out to Brayden’s family. He will be missed.”

The JEOPARDY! family is heartbroken by the tragic loss of Brayden Smith. He was kind, funny and absolutely brilliant. Our deepest condolences go out to Brayden’s family. He will be missed. <https://t.co/aFQRt6KzPc>

— Jeopardy! (@Jeopardy) February 12, 2021

In a video published by “Jeopardy!” earlier this year, Smith reflected on his five-day streak with the show. “I just wanted to stay there as long as possible. It’s really a great feeling to be on the set, to be around smart, nice warm people and to be around Alex who has been sort of a mainstay in my life,” he said.

Smith, a 2020 graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, had worked as an intern at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C. where he researched criminal justice reform issues, according to an obituary provided to the Las Vegas Review-Journal. “He was a voracious reader and autodidact, a lover of knowledge and an advocate for justice. His room was bursting with books on political science, philosophy, economics, and history,” the obituary said.

His obituary said he played the saxophone and enjoyed musicians like Duke Ellington and Steely Dan, and was a fan of classic and not-so-classic movies alike. “He could be explaining the symbolism in Citizen Kane one moment and the comedic timing in Dumb and Dumber the next,” the obituary said.

Smith was expected to compete in the show’s upcoming Tournament of Champions. He said in a video published by the show, “‘Jeopardy!’ is so much better than anything I could have even

imagined. Every moment since I last was on the studio live has been a moment that I've been wanting to get back on there."

"I'm really grateful for everything, all the opportunities that I had," he said. "I'm just glad that we were able to do it and I'm glad that I was able to show what I was capable of."

His mother, Debbie Smith, said on Twitter Friday that she was grateful her son was able to live out his dream on Jeopardy. "The outpouring of love for Brayden is overwhelming. We can't express how much your beautiful comments are comforting us during this painfully sad time," she said.