



Do you love Jeopardy! I do. It's a show I watched with my mom since I was a kid. I even tried out once but badly flubbed the online test... never got to try again, getting kidnapped by police and such. Anyway, I'm currently watching the latest mega-champ, Amy Schneider, and she is AWESOME! There's a lot about her to like, but my favorite thing has to be, despite her impressive dominance (second highest win total, I believe, behind the G.O.A.T., Ken Jennings), she plainly eschews the foolish, faddish, I'm-a-Jeopardy-badass pseudo-strategy of choosing the last question in a category first. This was popularized by mega-champ James Holzhauer, but he was a very special player indeed, unlike the long line of wannabes who have crudely copied him since. Arguably the strongest Jeopardy! player ever (though I still roll with Team Ken), James always chose the \$1000 clues first, moving horizontally across the board to amass cash before finding the first Daily Double, often in the \$600 or \$800 ~~row~~ ^(3rd or 4th) row. With his opponents nearly cashless, due to his incredible speed and ability to answer almost any question, he'd go all in, creating either a demoralizing ~~lead~~ ^{early} lead or, at worst, a re-levelled playing field — both outcomes leaving him a clear advantage. For James, it was a brilliant strategy; not so for mere mortals, though, as most of us benefit from the easier questions clarifying the quirks or gimmicks of any particular category, allowing us to get more correct answers. Nevertheless, probably 7 out of 10 contestants since him ~~emulated~~ ^{superficially} mimicked the technique, though few seem to even understand the theory and fewer still have the skill to make it work. They just deplete the game for the rest of us. But not Amy... she kicks butt AND plays with a traditional and more conservative style I think Alex Trebek would smile on. 😊 Unlike James, she never puts herself at risk with gratuitous massive Daily Double wagers, which is slightly less exciting, but not by much. She is proof that you don't need to be a show-off to be an all-time great.

Now for the more embarrassing part of this. Yes, I'm SO happy Amy is winning big now, but... I'm even happier that the last mega champ is not winning anymore. Matt Amodio was, for me, easily the most unworthy champion I've ever seen on Jeopardy. That's awful to say, right? So uncharitable. And I'm the guy who roots for everyone, in any competition. Even where I have favorites, like in tennis or motocross, I still just root for people, never against others, because it seems rottenly malicious to actively hope someone will mess up. I'm like a universal cheerleader — I'll shake the pom-poms for

anybody; excluding cops and pig-proxies, of course. When badge-whores show up, I pray for colossal failure, but cops are a special class, obviously. Mercenaries don't need goodwill, but overall, I want to see every actual person succeed and leave happy. So, why the negativity toward Amodio? I'm ashamed, he seems like a stand-up guy (no ~~uniform and~~ gun in the closet, so far as I can tell), but he racked up 3 Jeopardy!-specific strikes with me, sadly. First, he was an unimpressive champion, in that he frequently answered wrongly — always a Jeopardy! no-no — and he always answered with such uncertainty, like he was maybe just a good guesser. OK, so this strike isn't so bad... it might even be endearing, all by itself. Strike 2, though... he played the "cool kid" game, faddishly starting low on the board, and like most of us, he really wasn't good enough to effectively use the strategy. He may have just hunted for the first Daily Double to clear it away quickly, and that's not a bad idea — if it's found early, then no one can use it to run away with the round — but after he got it, he stayed with the later clues! Why? There's no benefit anymore, unless you just want to fluster your opponents, but since everyone wants to play that way now anyway, there's truly nothing to gain (for players less powerful than James or Ken), ~~but~~ probably 15% to 20% of the questions to lose by beginning with the hardest ones first. Super annoying, but STILL, I'd have rooted ~~him on~~ him on if that were his only sin. Strike 3, I found unforgivable in a champion, a one-strike offence, really... see, in Jeopardy, you must phrase your answers as questions, typically beginning with "what is" or "who is" or "what are". Mr. Amodio ran a knife through the heart of grammar, though, for no apparent reason (perhaps he felt, "if it's good enough for the Watson computer...", I dunno), answering every single question with "what is...?". Whether it was a proper name or a plural noun, we had to hear this ninny sputter answers like, "what is Elvis?"; "what is potatoes?"; or "what is Barack and Michelle Obama?". Holy hell, man... are you JUST trying to annoy people?

I know, I know. I'm seeming — no, I'm being — awfully petty here. It doesn't feel great. But, I'll ride it out and add this: The one silver lining to Amodio winning so much, for me, is that we'll soon get to see him face REAL champions, like Ken Jennings, James Holzhauer, Brad Rutter... and Amy Schneider. 😊 They're gonna eat that dingbat for breakfast — wanna bet? And for once, I'll be happy to see it happen.

Mein Gott... does all this make me a Jeopardy Nazi?? I kinda think it must. 😊
Sorry for showing my petulant side. (But... enjoy the show!)