



Birmingham man achieves dream of being on Jeopardy, uses platform to encourage others with Autism



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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (WIAT) — As a child, Birmingham native Kelvin Smith was fascinated with the TV game show Jeopardy. After trying for ten years to land a spot on the show, his dream finally came true.

The show hasn't aired yet, so we don't know if Smith is a Jeopardy winner, but we do know he's already a champion for so many others like him who also have autism.

At age ten, doctors diagnosed Smith with Autism Spectrum Disorder – or Asperger's. But Smith never let his diagnosis slow him down. As a young man who's known achievement, from John Carroll High School to Auburn University, he was willing to put in the work for the chance of a lifetime.

"It was an experience I will not forget, I can tell you that right now," Smith said.

Smith says he studied past Jeopardy champions. He researched what they read and how they prepared, and now it's all paying off.

He mostly credits his mother for making his dreams come true. He says she realized early in his life that he was special.

"Ever since I was two, she knew I was different because how I knew my 12 times table by the time I was two."

He sees his appearance on Jeopardy as a way of putting autism on a national stage.

“It’s a good message to send to other people with autism to know that you can do this, you can do this.”

Smith is bound by contract not to reveal how well he performed on the show, but one thing is clear, meeting Alex Trebek and answering questions as a Jeopardy contestant was an experience he’ll never forget.

“Adrenalin was pumping through me and I loved it, I loved every moment of it.”

This dream chaser’s goals don’t end with Jeopardy. Right now, he’s enrolled in a doctorate program at Georgia Tech in Atlanta studying Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. He plans to start a charity for students with autism who are studying Science, Engineering, Technology, and Math (STEM).

The Jeopardy episode with Kelvin Smith airs Thursday, November 2nd at 2:30 p.m. here on CBS 42.

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