

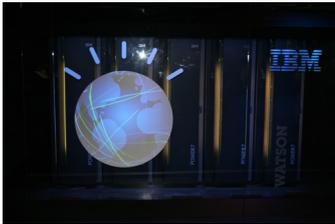
## IBM Watson wins Jeopardy

Written by bad\_brain

Friday, 18 February 2011 13:29 -

---

IBM super computer [Watson came away victorious](#) during Jeopardy Wednesday, but not before the game show's former champions Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter rallied a formidable defense. In the end, however, the humans were no match for Watson, which won with a commanding lead of \$77,147 after three days of Jeopardy play. Jennings took second place at \$24,000 and Rutter was third with \$21,600. "I for one welcome our new computer overlords," Jennings jokingly wrote in his answer during Final Jeopardy on Wednesday's broadcast. The three-night Jeopardy challenge was taped in January at IBM's T. J. Watson Research Laboratory in Yorktown Heights, New York.



As victor, Watson takes home a \$1 million prize, which IBM plans to donate to [World Vision](#) and

[World Community Grid](#)

. Jennings and Rutter will also donate 50 percent of their winnings to separate charities.

## Watson Commands Then Stumbles

## IBM Watson wins Jeopardy

Written by bad\_brain

Friday, 18 February 2011 13:29 -

---

At the outset of Wednesday's broadcast it appeared as though Watson was going to obliterate its human rivals once again. But the tide turned thanks to a category that asked you to match the name of an Actor/Director to the person's movie titles. Rutter and Jennings appeared to be jumping on the buzzer before knowing the answer; confident they would be able to answer these questions on the spot. The strategy worked, and after the first 15 questions, the score (in terms of clues answered) was Watson 7, Jennings 4 and Rutter 3. Watson and Rutter also each answered one clue incorrectly.

### Watson Gets PWNED

Things appeared to be getting even worse for Watson during the next 15 clues. The computer Watson managed just 3 answers to Jennings' 6 and Rutter's 5. Watson and Jennings both answered one question incorrectly during this round.

Watson stumbled on a variety of subjects from politics to vague knowledge about newspaper sections to [USA Today's price hike in 2008](#). Watson failed to answer, for example, that Slovenia is the only former Yugoslav republic in the European Union. The computer did have Slovenia as one of its three probable answers, but its certainty about the correct answer wasn't high enough. Watson answered, "What is Serbia?" instead--a country that is not in the EU. Rutter also answered this clue incorrectly and Jennings didn't hazard a guess.

After the first 30 Jeopardy clues Jennings and Watson had each correctly answered 10 and Rutter was close behind with 8, with two clues receiving incorrect answers from the contestants.

### Humans In Jeopardy

Despite Watson's shortcomings in the first regular Jeopardy round, the super computer

## IBM Watson wins Jeopardy

Written by bad\_brain

Friday, 18 February 2011 13:29 -

---

bounced back during Wednesday's Double Jeopardy. Watson took a commanding lead with 18 correct answers to Jennings' 7 and Rutter's 4. Watson also incorrectly answered a Daily Double question during the round.

After that it was on to Final Jeopardy where all three contestants correctly answered that Bram Stoker's Dracula was inspired by William Wilkinson's '[An account of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia](#)'.

### The Takeaway

Now that the battle is over there will be endless debates about whether this was a fair fight, and if Watson had an advantage or not in its ability to trigger the buzzer faster and more consistently than Jennings and Rutter. And while it's fun to view Jeopardy's IBM Challenge as a classic man versus machine battle, this contest was never just about Jeopardy.

Watson is a significant leap a machine's ability to understand context in human language. As IBM has said on several occasions, the goal was not to create a self-aware [super computer](#) that can run amok such as HAL 9000 from

*2001: A Space Odyssey*

or Skynet from

*The Terminator*

. But a question and answer machine like the ship computer in

*Star Trek: The Next Generation*

.

But we're not quite there yet. To construct Watson, IBM used [200 million pages of content stored on 4 terabytes of disk space](#)

, as much as 16 terabytes of memory (reports have varied), about 2,800 processor cores and approximately 6 million logic rules to determine the best answers. Watson took up 10 server racks, each with 10

[IBM Power 750 servers](#)

and two large refrigeration units all of which was housed in its own room on IBM's Yorktown

## IBM Watson wins Jeopardy

Written by bad\_brain

Friday, 18 February 2011 13:29 -

---

Heights campus. All that for a computer that can parse language via text files, and not through voice-based input as the

*Star Trek*

computer does.

Voice-activated or not, IBM believes the technology behind Watson can be applied to a variety of fields, most notably medicine. The company plans to announce on Thursday a joint project with Columbia University and the University of Maryland to create a cybernetic physician's assistant using Watson's technology, according to [The New York Times](#). IBM will also work with Nuance Communications to include voice recognition for the new medical project--a feature that could be ready before the end of 2012.

It's a world of exciting possibilities for Watson's technology, especially if within our lifetime we will one day be able to walk up to a computer and say, "Tea. Earl Grey, hot."

For a look at Watson and the philosophical questions the existence of this super computer poses, check out IBM's [A Smarter Planet blog post about Jeopardy Day 3](#).