



By Kent C. Horner for USA TODAY

\$1.3M richer: Ken Jennings with wife Mindy and son Dylan: "Money is not why I'm doing it. I have a very happy life."

'Jeopardy!' ace knows no limits

Here's the buzz:
How long can
Jennings go on?

By Janet Kornblum
USA TODAY

MURRAY, Utah — When people meet Ken Jennings and realize the fair-haired, boyish-looking 30-year-old is "that *Jeopardy!* guy" who ended last season by decimating rival

Cover story

upon rival, they want to know one thing: What's his secret?

How, night after night, does Jennings, a computer programmer from suburban Salt Lake City, hit the buzzer so quickly on America's toughest quiz show? And he's not just quick on the draw; he gets almost every question right — 1,335 last season and counting. He has won 39 consecutive games, in-



AP/Sony-Jeopardy!

Poised for prosperity:
39 wins and counting.

cluding Monday night's. Since he first appeared on June 2, he has riveted viewers with his timing, skill and knowledge and earned \$1.3 million — more than any other *Jeopardy!* winner in history.

So what is his secret? Maybe it's his lifelong obsession with quiz games — he got hooked on *Jeopardy!* as a child in South Korea, where he spent grades 2 through 12 while his father worked as an international lawyer. His mother is an elementary school librarian.

Or maybe it's his close-knit family — along with a wife and child, he has a brother and two sisters who, with their families, frequently gather in his parents' home. Maybe it's his clean living — as a devout Mormon, he abstains from alcohol.

But maybe it's that Jennings "is just different," says Jennings' close friend Earl Cahill, who was his roommate at Brigham Young University,

Please see COVER STORY next page ►