

Answer: After tonight, this man could be one step closer to stealing Ken Jennings's TV title

Who is Mr. Jeopardy's threat from the North?

BY OLIVER MOORE

A blazing-fast finger and his trademark black "intimidator suit" have helped push Torontonian Lan Djang into the final rounds of *Jeopardy! Ultimate Tournament of Champions*.

The suit has been ever-present during his recent streak of victories, a superstitious boost for his confidence. But the stakes are getting higher each round and the public won't know until tonight whether Mr. Djang's personal talisman helped propel him to a 10th victory.

A victory tonight would put Mr. Djang in a group of six finalists. One more win and he will secure a spot in a match later this month against *Jeopardy!* king Ken Jennings, the most successful contestant in the game show's history.

Mr. Djang has worn the suit for five consecutive *Jeopardy!* appearances, since buying it at the landmark Tom's Place store in Toronto's Kensington Market. He bought it on the advice of a friend who wears the same suit when he fires people. When he barely squeaked through an earlier game, he began to believe in its lucky charm.

Even *Jeopardy!* host Alex Trebek, who hails from Sudbury, Ont., took notice, saying "It must have been the suit, Lan, because you made it," Mr. Djang recalled.

"I actually talked to him about it during one of the off-camera moments and he remembered Tom's [Place]."

In keeping with his contract, the health-policy analyst could not say if he wins in the episode that was taped earlier, but airs tonight. However, he mused about what he might do, should he make it to the final round of the tournament.

"I'd certainly think about retiring if I reach the final, because even if you lose you get [\$250,000] on top of the money you've won, so that's at least [\$350,000]," he said.

But the real goal involves getting to the final round and trouncing Mr. Jennings. And the overall prize of \$2-million (U.S.) would give him the luxury of pursuing a quirky dream: "I'd like to do a reality show



Tom Mihalik fits Lan Djang, *Jeopardy!* champion, in his lucky Tom's Place suit.

A victory on *Jeopardy!* tonight would advance Lan Djang, a health-policy analyst in Toronto, into the final rounds of the show's Ultimate Tournament of Champions.

with Ken, touring small towns and beating people at trivia," Mr. Djang said. "It'd be like [the Paris Hilton series] *The Simple Life*, but we'll call it *The Complicated Life*."

Even without the big prize, he has already paid off most of the mortgage on his downtown condo with earlier winnings and looks forward to working a lot less if he makes it farther in the tournament, dubbed the "quest for Ken."

For years, the game show had a

five-game limit, after which winners were given their prize money and sent home. Removing that barrier led to the domination of Mr. Jennings, who won 74 consecutive games and raised the ire of some who'd been stopped at five victories.

Those criticisms are being addressed with the current tournament, which pits 20 years worth of five-time champions against each other in a bid to find the two best. This pair will meet Mr. Jennings in a

special match slated to run May 23-25.

Mr. Djang was one of 150 five-time winners invited by *Jeopardy!* to compete in the tournament. He won in his first two appearances. Tonight is his third.

The pressure has been building, but Mr. Djang said this week that his experience on the show calmed the worst of his nerves. He is studying hard and practising his clicking speed, which he has measured at

about a sixth of a second. He watches all the *Jeopardy!* episodes he can and carries around a notebook, in which he writes down facts he needs to look up.

He knows that the competitive standard is much higher now than it was in his earlier appearances on the show (in 2001), and he takes the game far more seriously.

"When I went on the first time, I barely studied at all," he said. "The only things I looked up were Ameri-

can subjects, because I didn't want to be burned for being Canadian."

Most of his social life got put on hold during his recent run on the show, he said, as he spends a lot of his time studying up on subjects that, for the most part, don't really interest him.

"As for television, I watch only *Jeopardy!*," he said. "I've successfully fought off my video-game addiction but have got addicted to the *Jeopardy!* home game."