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'Jeopardy' features man against machine on WCPO-TV

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By: Tom McKee

CINCINNATI - It's man vs. machine Monday night on "Jeopardy" on WCPO-TV at 7:30 p.m.

Two of the television game show's greatest champions – Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter – will match wits for three nights against "Watson," an IBM computer.

IBM computer experts have spent four years programming "Watson" to be able to quickly recall information on demand.

The event has caught the attention of students and faculty members in the School of Computing Sciences and Infomatics in the University of Cincinnati College of Engineering.

They're studying machine learning and artificial intelligence that can be applied to commercial uses.

"I bet 'Watson' will win," said Research Assistant and PhD Candidate Victor Fang. "I bet \$10 with my friends."

Wang said he believes it's a milestone of scientific achievement that's a win-win strategy.

"If the 'Watson' machine can beat the human in the 'Jeopardy' games, that means the machine now is able to understand the natural language of humans," he said. "If the human wins, that means we are still strong in this kind of natural intelligence."

Fellow graduate student Mohammad Rawsashdh agreed.

"I bet for 'Watson' to win," he said. "You are using powerful machines and 'Watson' is capable of processing the knowledge presented to it and he has a huge amount of data."

Professor Anca Ralescu said she wasn't sure of the outcome. She added she believes a lot depends upon the nature of the questions.

"If it's just an exercise in information retrieval, 'Watson' will win," she said. "But, if the questions are very subtle, then perhaps humans have a much easier time to answer them than the machine."

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