

Toronto??? (Day 2)

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I suppose all the misery of flying around the country has finally given me an advantage. The final Jeopardy answer was, "Its largest airport was named for a World War II hero; its second largest, for a World War II battle." I knew the question right away and so did Jennings and Rutter. Watson's question was "[What is Toronto ???](#)" Sorry old boy, that is wrong. To his credit he did note his lack of confidence in the answer with three question marks.

Watson did not have to worry too much because in addition to his ability to provide the right questions on day two, he also knew how to bet and only wagered a small portion (\$947) of his massive winnings. At the end of the first game, Watson is sitting in a comfortable lead with \$35,734 to \$10,400 for Brad Rutter and \$4,800 for Ken Jennings. I wonder if there is part of Watson's [betting strategy](#) that says, "I have a big lead, I'll increase my confidence threshold so I make less mistakes." Not that there are many.

In Tuesday's game it was pretty much all Watson until the Toronto blunder. He just zoomed right through some categories and daily doubles. His betting amount (\$6435) drew laughter from the audience. (He was sitting on \$14,600 dollars at the time). There were a few questions he did not try to answer and even gave a wrong answer. The human contestants even got a chance to earn a few bucks. Another interesting thing I noted was he will refer to "\$1200" and "twelve hundred" and not "one thousand two hundred." I also noticed he did this with another numbers as well. Thus, in addition to parsing human knowledge, he also has a basic understanding of how human like to hear data. This behavior is not difficult to program, but it is just a nice touch making Watson seem a little more "human."

IBM also took some time to further explain the "problem" of natural language and how it could relate to real solutions in several areas. As noted in the segment, most medical information is in "plain text" that is not "coded" for computer use. This is really one area where Watson's searching and reasoning will be very valuable. Tomorrow is the the final game. I don't see any way the carbon units can pull this out, even if they pool their talent.

"What is Chicago?" If you have never been stranded at O'Hare or breezed through Midway, you may not remember such things (emotional anchoring). Perhaps pieces of Watson shared the same experience, in a box.