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Survivor Winner Ben Drievergen On Spreading Message Of Hope

Posted By: Global Staff | December 22, 2017



By John Powell – GlobalTV.com

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He has beat the odds in more ways than one.

Ben Drievergen, the former U.S. Marine from Boise, Idaho, took the Heroes across the finish line in last night's finale of Survivor: Heroes vs. Healers vs. Hustlers.

Ben's five jury votes were more than enough to assure him victory over Chrissy (two votes) and Ryan (one vote).

"It is a crazy game and the greatest game on Earth!" an excited Ben told GlobalTV.com.

Ben's win was astonishing considering he was behind the 8-ball for the last phase of the game. With no allies, Ben had to rely on his resourcefulness and his determination to get him to the end as there was no alliance to save him or support him in any way. He truly was a tribe of one.

"The drive to win came from my family. I owe everything to my wife and my kid. There is no way that I was leaving that island without trying everything possible to get to the end. I just kept going," Ben said of his resolve to keep on fighting until the final votes were cast.

One major factor, besides the numerous Immunity Idols he scoured the island for, which set the table for Ben securing the title of Sole Survivor was the twist Chrissy was presented with. As the winner of the final Immunity Challenge Chrissy had to vote for someone to take to the end while the other two finalists had to battle it out in a fire-making challenge to earn their way to the final Tribal Council. Chrissy elected to take Ryan leaving Ben and Devon to duel for that final spot in the final three.

"Oh, man. It was one more chance and unbelievable! I knew I was going home at the four and the upside down "U" which was absolutely horrible. It was amazing! Once Chrissy started reading it (the advantage) and once it started clicking in my head, it was awesome," recalled Ben. "I had been thinking of getting an upside down "U" tattooed on my foot. (Laughs) That is how much it shook me because it was just so brutal but to get that second chance was awesome."



Chrissy and Ben had a love-hate relationship on the island. The two power players began the game as close allies and then slowly but surely they became bitter enemies. For Ben, it was the tribal switcheroos that forever changed their dynamic.

"After the merge when we got together, we didn't want a lot of people to know we were working together. I knew that she, J.P. and Ryan got really close from their tribe so I knew those three were really tight. I was no longer Chrissy's number one. I still wanted to work with Chrissy, of course, we needed the numbers, but at that point Lauren had become my number one," he explained.

A big part of Ben’s Survivor story was his life as a U.S. Marine and his struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). One of the most emotional scenes of the season was a rattled Ben leaving camp to centre himself after a piece of bamboo popped in the camp fire bringing back many unwanted memories.

“Relating stories doesn’t get into the guts of things. Those are the things that are hard to talk about with other people. You just don’t feel like people will understand. You feel alone. You feel you are on an island. For me, it took a while to talk about it. It took a while for me to be open about it. On the show, with the bamboo and everything, that forced my hand to talk about it. It is a part of me and I am just learning from it and growing from it,” said Ben reflecting on the experience.

In another powerful scene, Ben became upset when castaway Joe Mena used his military background against him. Since the game ended Ben has spoken to Joe and smoothed things over.



“At the time it was something that I let get too personal but it was a game move for Joe and he doesn’t know about my story and what I had been through so he would never know how important that is to me. You just never say that to a U.S. Marine but as a game move, I respect it. He was on the bottom and he took a swing and he connected. He hit the button. Outside of the game, Joe is an all-around good guy. He is a man of his word and you don’t see that very much these days,” said Ben of his former rival.

Ben is proud to be able to shed some light on PTSD, an issue that haunts many veterans when they return home to the life they left behind. Ben has a message to any combat veteran who has found themselves dealing with how debilitating PTSD can truly be.

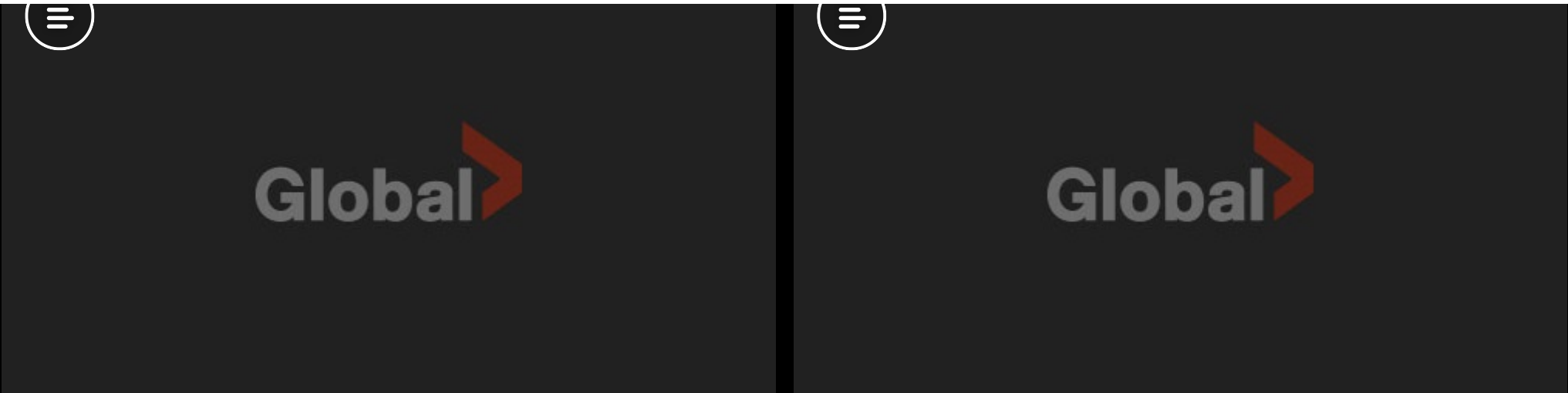
“Just reach out and talk to someone whether it be a therapist, a buddy, your mom. It is not a sign of weakness. There is so much more to life after the military. There can be a good life. It doesn’t have to end with a bullet. If we can help reduce the suicide rate among combat vets that would be an amazing thing,” he said.

When it comes to the prize money, Ben and his family have already formulated a sensible strategy that doesn’t include any outwitting, outlasting or outplaying.

“We are going to put it in the bank and pay off some debts and try to set this money up to work for us so we don’t have to work later on in life,” said Ben.

Survivor returns for a 36th season entitled Ghost Island. The theme is past Survivor mistakes. The season was taped in the summer of 2017 in Fiji and will air in the spring of 2018.

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