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Justin Pioppi: 'I Really Fought For My Spot'

Posted By: John Powell | March 13, 2025



Justin Pioppi. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

By John Powell – GlobalTV.com



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Justin Pioppi, the pizzeria manager from Massachusetts, is perhaps the biggest victim of fate, circumstance the series has ever seen at the longest and most complicated and confusing tribal council in Survivor history.

Mary got the ball rolling by successfully playing her Shot in the Dark. Justin himself also threw a wrench into the works as he lost his vote during the journey earlier but didn't tell any of his tribemates that. Why none of his tribemates figured that out after so many revotes until Jeff Probst revealed that fact to them is anyone's guess. After tied revote after revote it was either the Purple Rock of Doom scenario that took out Pashcal during Survivor: Marquesas or Cedrek could cast the only deciding vote. Cedrek elected to keep Sai and send Justin to Ponderosa.

John Powell: How are you, Justin?

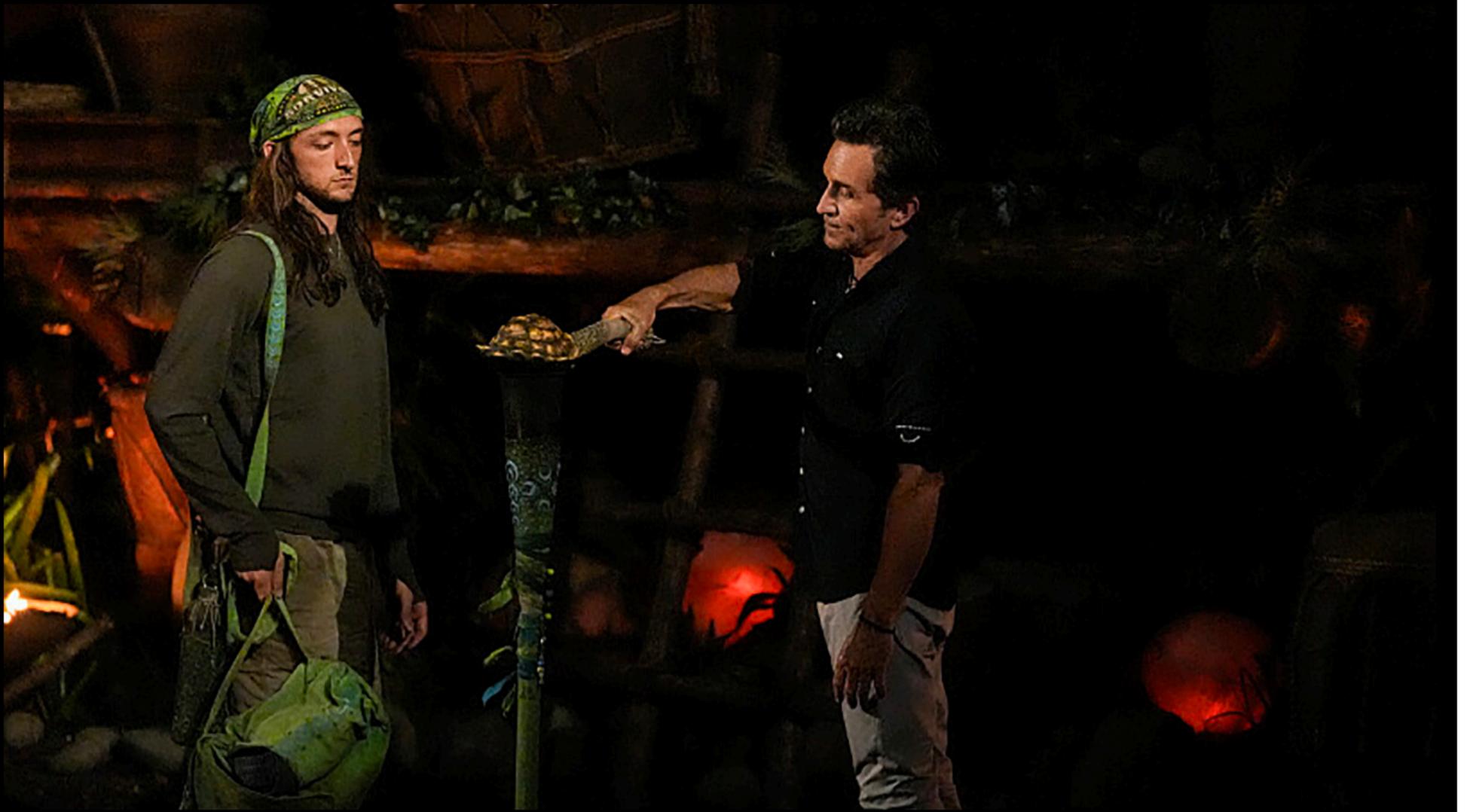
Justin Pioppi: I'm as good as I can be, John, considering the craziness that happened last night.

John Powell: I have to ask you this question because it's incredibly important. I'm sorry to put you on the spot but my wife is a full-blooded Italian through and through and she would consider this blasphemy. Justin, I have to get your opinion pineapple on pizza. Yes or No?

Justin Pioppi: (laughs) I hate to disappoint your wife because she sounds lovely. I think it has a place just because of the richness of the cheese and the spices in the sauce. I think it can help cut through that and people just like the sweetness. It's good if you pair it with a spicy or a hot topping that can really kind of bring a lot of different flavors together and it can create an awesome combination. So, I would say don't knock it. When you come visit, we can make our own concoction.

John Powell: You've given me a whole new insight into it. I would expect nothing less. That was a crazy tribal council. What was it like watching it all back? I mean, you were there live. You experienced way more than we saw.

Justin Pioppi: I think that's what's the hardest part, John. It went on for so long and apparently it was the longest one in the history of the show. We all kind of knew we're in for a long night when we tribal cut to a commercial break. That's really rare to see.



Justin Pioppi and Jeff Probst. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

There's a lot of stuff that was said, some more important than other conversations, and it's just tough because I do not envy the jobs of any of the editors or the producers. They do an awesome job telling the story and just kind of figuring out a way to proceed forward. I'm just upset that it can be perceived that I didn't really fight for myself when in actuality, those first three votes, after Mary's Shot in the Dark hits, I had all of Cedrek's votes. I was confident in my relationship with him. I researched Cedrek at tribal council. That's why he stuck with me for those three votes. He wrote down Sai's name not once but twice. He was still willing to get rid of her after finding out that I had lost my vote and didn't reveal that.

John Powell: I was going to ask you about that because some viewers thought you didn't fight for your place, at least that is the perception from the edit.

Justin Pioppi: I really fought for my spot and I think 95% of the way it was in my favor. I think that's a combination of not only our relationship socially but also kind of the things that I was saying at tribal council. I was making an argument to Cedrek saying it's best for our joint interest to navigate this together. I think he saw that me as a logical person, someone who doesn't do well with variables.

I just think her saw Sai as somebody who was more apt to changing her vote. I knew where every vote was going in the first three tribal councils. The only one that I didn't know was that rogue vote on Kevin. When Kevin went home, I think that kind of shocked Cedrek. I think he said to himself: 'Why would she make that decision?' I don't know if it was kind of like a 'F-U!' in that sense. We don't really know why she did that but I think that that kind of alarmed Cedrek. I think that he and I were able to navigate a lot of the craziness that was the tribe. I just think he saw me as like a good ally. I think we had a good working relationship and he was confident in the fact that I was willing to listen to him. I wanted to know what was best not only for my game or his game, but for our game.



Mary Zheng and Justin Pioppi. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

John Powell: Why do you think in the end he made the decision that he did?

Justin Pioppi: There were a lot of powerful things that were talked about that didn't make the cut and ultimately it was his choice. He was in a very, very, very difficult position. I don't envy the position of the editors or the production team either. I don't envy Cedrek's position last night and he just made a call that he felt was best for him moving forward.

John Powell: Do you think not telling him you lost your vote was a factor?

Justin Pioppi: I thought of that a lot. I just know on the boat ride back to camp I was thinking that the track record of people telling their allies that they lost their vote isn't really the best...I'm not the biggest risk taker but I'm not risk averse. I like to take capital risk and something that I think mathematically will always or for the most part, work out in my favor.

I had 10 minutes from when I arrived back at camp before we went to go vote. I wanted to show up as Cedrek's number one guy and just tell him to stick with the plan. We had it in place where we were insulated enough where there will always be at least two people ahead of us who would go before us. If it wasn't Mary it was going to be Sai and I think you saw that play out last night with the way the votes were going.

John Powell: Speaking to Stephanie about the tribe she placed a lot of the tribe losing to the initial composition of the tribe in the sense that you guys didn't have very much muscle. What do you think were some of the main reasons why you just couldn't win those challenges and couldn't come together? Because you both all seemed like very strong individuals.

Justin Pioppi: When you see David, he literally looks like a Marvel superhero. You see Joe, a built-up guy...You have all these players who are just very, very strong people. I mean, Charity is a personal trainer. That's no knock on her either. Kyle's a really strong guy. I think when you look at it like that we were in for a world of hurt.

I that Kevin literally could have quit in the first 30 seconds. He was in THAT much pain. I give him credit for sucking it up and still competing...I tried to keep the tribe strong in terms our morale but when you're losing every day, know you're going back tribal...it turned into a self preservation thing. I was like: 'If I can just outlast this I know it'll be probably the hardest part of the game.' There's going to be a war between Civa and Lagi. They're going to need soldiers. I am willing to be enlisted.



Bianca Roses, Kamilla Karthigesu and Justin Pioppi. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

John Powell: Why couldn't Mary and Sai work together?

Justin Pioppi: I think you have two very, very strong and passionate women who see themselves as fighters and I give them credit. I wish they could have got along as a cohesive unit because they would just be an unbreakable duo. It's just they didn't see the game the same way. I think there was a lack of trust, especially with Mary voting Sai for the first tribal council and ever since that there was just no mending that bridge.

John Powell: The way we saw it on the show it appeared that you guys lost faith in Kevin but him being injured also figured into the decision to vote him out, correct?

Justin Pioppi: No, it wasn't even that. I pitched that to Cedrek because I wanted to kind of shore up our alliance together. Kevin was very, very, very injured and I give him so much credit for just sticking around. He could have quit. No one would have faulted him. I just know that he is such a strong person physically and mentally, he would never do that. I was just afraid that he would get pulled from the game.

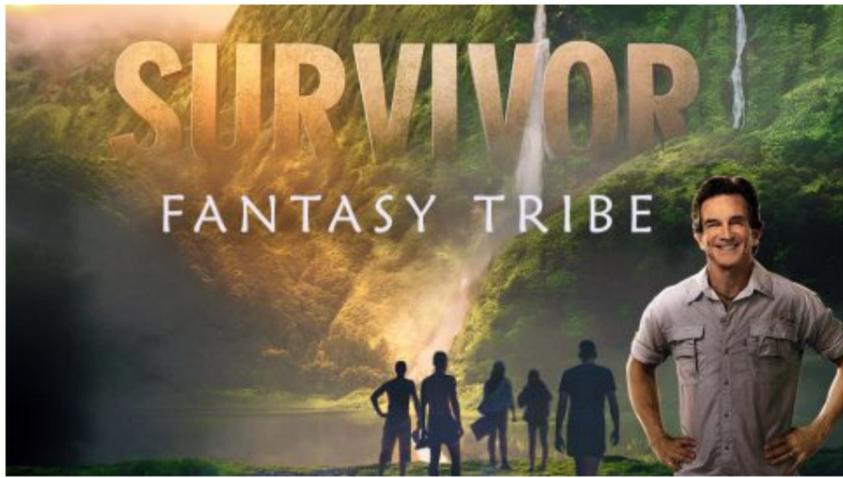
John Powell: How was it like playing with three tribes?

Justin Pioppi: It was tough in the sense that just one person can vote, as you saw last night, as you saw the week before. So the numbers aren't great if you're on the minority but there's always a chance where it can flip. I tried to position myself to the point where I was always in the middle.

John Powell: What people don't know as it wasn't mentioned on the show but you were playing for more than yourself on the island, weren't you?

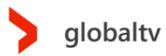
Justin Pioppi: I have to give all credit to my parents because they have made so many sacrifices for me in my life and just to provide me with things that they could have never even imagined. I went to an awesome, awesome school. I got a great education. I worked at the highest levels of state politics. I got to go out and live my dream of playing Survivor that wouldn't be possible without all of them and what they have done for me and kind of helped me along in life.

Mom got sick not once, not twice, but three times, which is just crazy, but it kind of instilled in me the values of to keep fighting, keep going, never ever give up no matter what that is. That is what kind of hurts me about the perception. The edit gives the impression that I did give and granted there's so much that had to be cut and edited together. I don't harp on anything with production or the editing team. It's just those values were instilled with me at our family's lowest points and I want to show everybody else never give up on yourself. Take a chance. As bad as things are if you keep fighting eventually you will get a break. You can figure something out. You can make your dream come true.



Survivor 48 Fantasy Tribe

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