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Survivor Winner Overcame His Past To Win It All

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Kyle Fraser. Photo: CBS.

By John Powell – GlobalTV.com



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From a troubled past to being crowned the Sole Survivor, Kyle Fraser, the attorney from Brooklyn, has come a long way in his life. Some say he went into the final tribal council as an underdog but the final verdict was in his favour. Case closed.

John Powell: Kyle, it's great to be talking to you. How are you?

Kyle Fraser: I'm doing good.

John Powell: Congratulations on winning Survivor! How are you feeling today?

Kyle Fraser: I'm feeling incredible! I mean, it was just so cool to watch that back. Obviously, I had to wait months to see it on TV but I'm so blessed and thankful. It was just such an awesome time.

John Powell: Now, what might be an even better title than winning Survivor is being the Sole Survivor. How do you feel about being the "Best Average Guy"?

Kyle Fraser: I feel great about it. I think I represented the average men and women out there really well. I was well-rounded and I said as much at Final Tribal. I felt like I was checking boxes in a very nuanced way that I'm proud of.

John Powell: When you went into Final Tribal did you feel you had the momentum? What was your mindset going in?

Kyle Fraser: I thought the challenge win gave me a bit of momentum. I think it was more important defensively because once records start getting brought up with Joe, you know, buzzwords like that start flying around. I'm a lawyer in real life and I know buzzwords can intrigue juries. So I was worried about that. The challenge gave me momentum but at the same time I was very scared of Joe and Eva as players. While I felt confident in my game I also respected the game they played. It was an odd position to be in.



Shauhin Davari, Chrissy Sarnowsky, Joe Hunter, David Kinne, Eva Erickson, Kamilla Karthigesu, Kyle Fraser, Star Toomey, Mitch Guerra and Cedrek McFadden. Photo: Chuck Snyder/CBS.

John Powell: Do you think the big reveal at tilted things in your favor?

Kyle Fraser: I definitely do. I wasn't out there to make moves just for the sake of making moves. I wanted everything to be intentional. Up to that point, I had played idols, won a challenge, was in the majority alliance and a lot of people in the minority thought I was with them. I had a secret alliance but still, people leaving the game kept telling me I didn't have a shot to win. I thought, What more do I need to do? So the Shauhin vote was this concrete piece of evidence: Look, I've been playing this game hard. I've been managing more relationships than any of you. At least, that's how I saw it. It felt like a turning point.

John Powell: One of the keys to you coming out on top was your secret alliance with Camilla. People knew you were friends but they didn't realize how closely you were working together. Were there any moments during the game when you were scared that alliance might be exposed?

Kyle Fraser: It's interesting. Early on, David was actually my number one. We were working hand-in-hand and had an incredible relationship in the Civa alliance. Kamilla and I were working together in the context of that alliance but after we got tribe-swapped together, we realized we clicked really well, very naturally.

The David vote was a critical turning point. It looked like a decision between Chrissy and Kamilla, but for me, it was David vs. Kamilla. That was the point I got really scared. It's funny. In trying to hide the relationship that Civa people already suspected, Kamilla and I actually became even closer. If you rewatch that episode you'll see what I mean.



Kyle Fraser. Photo: CBS.

John Powell: What's really interesting is you told each other, "Under no circumstances can I sit next to you at Final Tribal." That kind of honesty is rare. How did that conversation go? Any surprises?

Kyle Fraser: There were a lot of surprises. Kamilla and I had a great relationship. We trusted each other and she is probably one of the most dangerous players on that island, strategically. Trusting someone like that fully is scary but we were both proud of the games we played.

We had talked about everything, moves, strategy, timing. And we knew the only way one of us could win was if we weren't sitting next to each other. Maybe one of us could still win against the other, but it wasn't a chance we wanted to take. One of us needed to represent our shared game, and I'm lucky and happy that it was me but she absolutely would have done the same to me and I would've understood.

John Powell: Here's another surprising thing I heard from Eva. She told me you offered to take her place in the fire-making challenge, putting your game at risk. What went into that decision? Obviously, she said no, but what pushed you to that extreme?

Kyle Fraser: Eva and I had an extremely close relationship. People talk about me and Kamilla, and yes, Kamilla and I had a strategic relationship but Kamilla and I would talk maybe 45 seconds to a minute a day, in spurts.

Eva and I, though, we had a personal relationship, maybe the closest one I had out there. Joe might be a close second; it could flip between them but seeing her in pain was incredibly hard.



Jeff Probst and Kyle Fraser. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

We had conversations about how everything about her is a superpower. How she overcomes so much, it's one of the most impressive things I've ever seen. I learn from her like a sister every single day.

I knew when I offered to take her place she would never let me. The moment I told her she was doing fire, it was hers. And I think she made the right call.

John Powell: She called you her brother and told me about all the goofing off you did. You've had a bit of time now—have you earmarked the money for anything?

Kyle Fraser: Yeah, I had a lot of student loans. You go to law school thinking, I'm going to make a bunch of money but actually you end up with a bunch of debt. So I'm really happy I get to pay a lot of that down.

I also got married a month and a half after the game. I fit into my tux, don't worry! But I look at the money as a contribution to the partnership I'm in now with my wife, Maggie. I mean, who gets to get married and then watch themselves win Survivor? That's just as much her win as it is mine.

John Powell: That's wonderful. Another big theme this season was seeing players like you, Eva, and Joe, who are usually targeted for being strong, actually protect each other and move ahead together. What was that like?

Kyle Fraser: It was the perfect storm, really. People often look at players like us as shields, and words like "strong" are thrown around a lot when talking about alliances. But if you look at Joe, Eva, David, Mary, Shauhin, we were multifaceted players.

We weren't just physically strong. Joe was the most likable guy on the island. I had conversations with him that I'd never had in my life. So to be able to protect each other—it was exactly what you'd want.

You mean to tell me we get to align with people we like, trust that they're not going to write our names down, and go to the end together? Sign me up. I'll do it again. I'm really glad that alliance held strong—it helped me get to the end.

John Powell: We don't get to see everything because of editing and time. Is there anything about your journey – personal or strategic – that you wish fans had seen?

Kyle Fraser: We've talked a lot about my relationships with Eva and Joe, and the contrast with Kamilla. I also had a really close relationship with Mitch.

My first day was rough. I was way harder on myself than I should've been. I was in a hole. That first night, Mitch and I just talked for hours. Then we did it again the next night. I learned so much about him, his fight, who he is as a person. It brought me back to life in the game. Our relationship was important, both emotionally and strategically. He was a good friend and a great player.

John Powell: You've been open about turning your life around. What would you say to someone at the same crossroads you once faced? What advice would you give them?

Kyle Fraser: Lean on people. When people hear about incarceration, they assume you're surrounded by awful people, but that's not always true. You're stuck in a place where calling a loved one costs a ton. You build relationships with the people around you—just like on Survivor.

So if you're down, or you've made mistakes, or you feel like you've been treated unfairly because of those mistakes, you have to have hope. You have to be willing to accept help. That's what lets you move forward. That's what happened to me in life. And, ironically, it's what happened to me in the game too.

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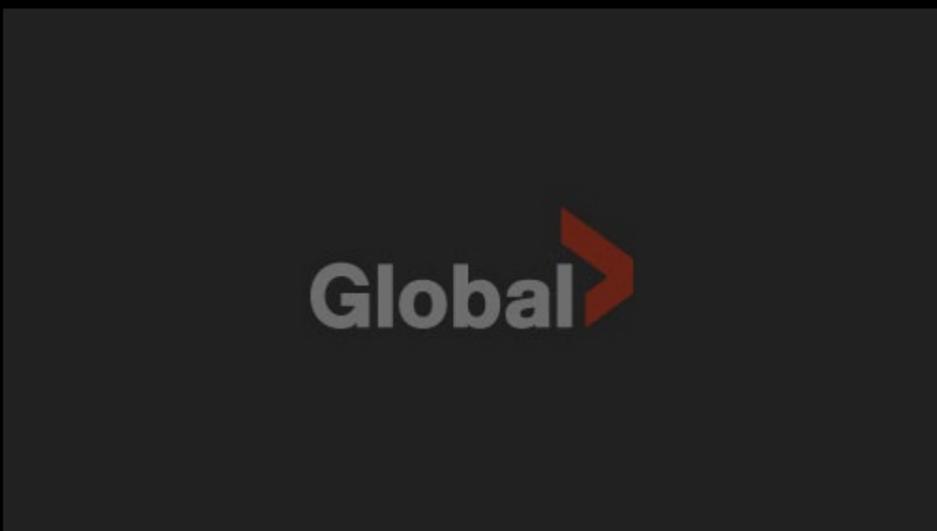


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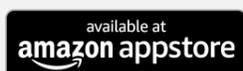


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